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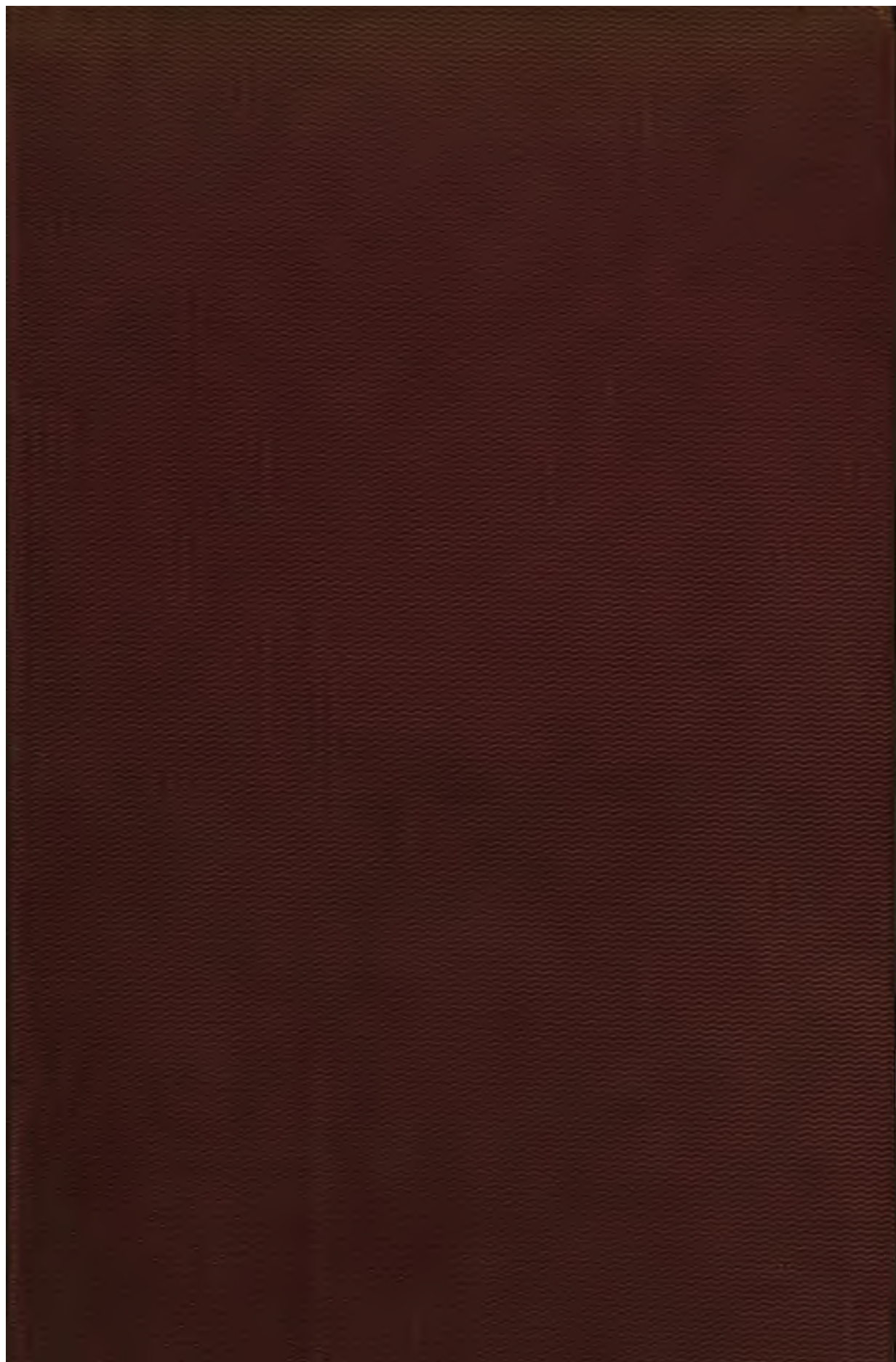
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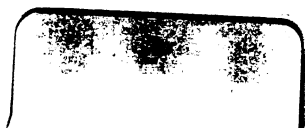


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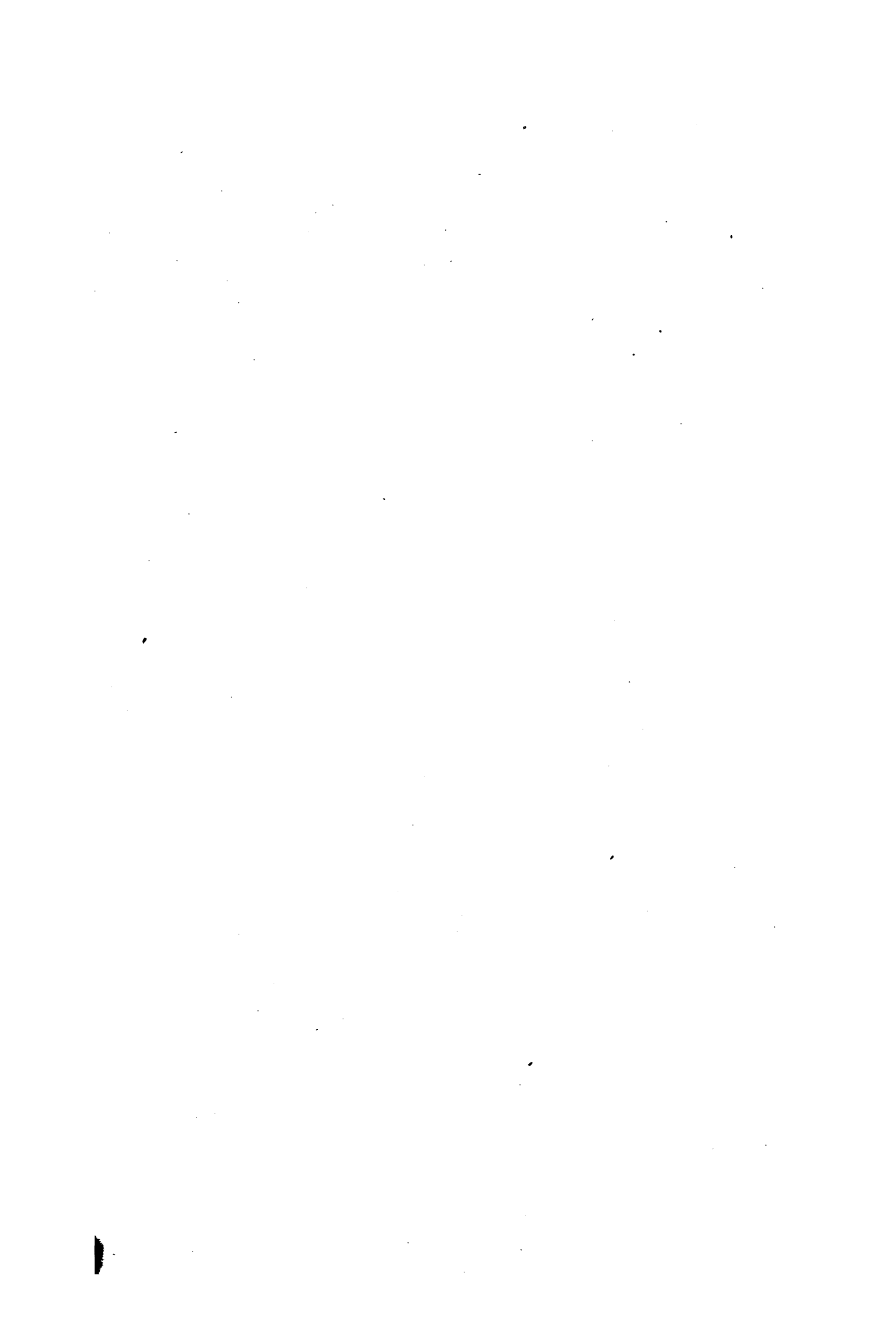
THE SCIENCE OF RELIGION

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THE SCIENCE OF RELIGION

INTRODUCTION
TO
THE SCIENCE OF RELIGION

Four Lectures

DELIVERED AT THE ROYAL INSTITUTION

IN

FEBRUARY AND MARCH 1870

BY

F. MAX MÜLLER, M.A.

MEMBRE ÉTRANGER DE L'INSTITUT DE FRANCE

Quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus

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Wm. Miller

FIRST LECTURE.

Delivered at the Royal Institution, February 19, 1870.

WHEN I undertook for the first time to deliver a course of lectures in this Institution, I chose for my subject the *Science of Language*. What I then had at heart was to show to you, and to the world at large, that the comparative study of the principal languages of mankind was based on principles sound and scientific, and that it had brought to light results which deserved a larger share of public interest than they had as yet received. I tried to convince, not only scholars by profession, but historians, theologians, and philosophers, nay everybody who had once felt the charm of gazing inwardly upon the secret workings of his own mind, veiled and revealed as they are in the flowing forms of language, that the discoveries made by comparative philologists could no longer be ignored with impunity; and I submitted that after the progress achieved in a scientific study of the principal branches of the vast realm of human speech, our new science, the Science of Language, might claim by right its seat at the round-table of the intellectual chivalry of our age.

Such was the goodness of the cause I had then to defend, that, however imperfect my own pleading, the verdict of the public has been immediate and almost unanimous. During the years that have elapsed since the delivery of my first course of lectures, the science of language has had its full share of public recognition. Whether we look at the number of books that have been published for the advancement and elucidation of our science, or at the excellent articles in the daily, weekly, fortnightly, monthly, or quarterly reviews, or

at the frequent notices of its results scattered about in works on philosophy, theology, and ancient history, we may well rest satisfied. The example set by France and Germany, in founding chairs of Sanskrit and Comparative Philology, has been followed of late in nearly all the universities of England, Ireland, and Scotland. We need not fear for the future of the Science of Language. A career so auspiciously begun, in spite of strong prejudices that had to be encountered, will lead on from year to year to greater triumphs. Our best public schools, if they have not done so already, will soon have to follow the example set by the universities. It is but fair that schoolboys who are made to devote so many hours every day to the laborious acquisition of languages, should now and then be taken by a safe guide to enjoy from a higher point of view that living panorama of human speech which has been surveyed and carefully mapped out by patient explorers and bold discoverers: nor is there any longer an excuse why, even in the most elementary lessons—nay, I should say, why more particularly in these elementary lessons, the dark and dreary passages of Greek and Latin, of French and German grammar, should not be lighted up by the electric light of Comparative Philology. When last year I travelled in Germany I found that lectures on Comparative Philology are now attended in the universities by nearly all who study Greek and Latin. At Leipzig alone the lectures of the professor of Sanskrit were attended by more than fifty undergraduates, who first acquire that amount of knowledge of Sanskrit which is

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absolutely necessary before entering upon a study of Comparative Grammar. The introduction of Greek into the universities of Europe in the fifteenth century could hardly have caused a greater revolution than the discovery of Sanskrit and the study of Comparative Philology in the nineteenth century. Very few indeed now take their degree of Master of Arts in Germany or would be allowed to teach at a public school, without having been examined in the principles of Comparative Philology, nay, in the elements of Sanskrit grammar. Why should it be different in England? The intellectual fibre, I know, is not different in the youth of England and in the youth of Germany, and if there is but a fair field and no favour, Comparative Philology, I feel convinced, will soon hold in England too that place which it ought to hold at every public school, in every university, and in every classical examination.

In beginning to-day a course of lectures on the *Science of Religion*—or I should rather say on some preliminary points that have to be settled before we can enter upon a truly scientific study of the religions of the world—I feel as I felt when first pleading in this very place for the Science of Language.

I know that I shall have to meet determined antagonists who will deny the possibility of a scientific treatment of religions as they denied the possibility of a scientific treatment of languages. I foresee even a far more serious conflict with familiar prejudices and deep-rooted convictions; but I feel at the same time that I am prepared to meet my antagonists; and I have such faith in their honesty of purpose, that I doubt not of a patient and impartial hearing on their part, and of a verdict influenced by nothing but by the evidence that I shall have to place before them.

In these our days it is almost impossible to speak of religion with-

out giving offence either on the right or on the left. With some, religion seems too sacred a subject for scientific treatment; with others it stands on a level with alchemy and astrology, a mere tissue of errors or hallucinations, far beneath the notice of the man of science. In a certain sense, I accept both these views. Religion is a sacred subject, and whether in its most perfect or in its most imperfect form, it has a right to our highest reverence. No one—this I can promise—who attends these lectures, be he Christian or Jew, Hindu or Mohammedan, shall hear his own way of serving God spoken of irreverently. But true reverence does not consist in declaring a subject, because it is dear to us, to be unfit for free and honest enquiry: far from it! True reverence is shown in treating every subject, however sacred, however dear to us, with perfect confidence; without fear and without favour; with tenderness and love, by all means, but, before all, with an unflinching and uncompromising loyalty to truth. I also admit that religion has stood in former ages, and stands even in our own age, if we look abroad, ay, even if we look into some dark places at home, on a level with alchemy and astrology; but for the discovery of truth there is nothing so useful as the study of errors, and we know that in alchemy there lay the seed of chemistry, and that astrology was more or less a yearning and groping after the true science of astronomy.

But although I shall be most careful to avoid giving offence, I know perfectly well that many a statement I shall have to make, and many an opinion I shall have to express, will sound strange and startling to some of my hearers. The very title of the *Science of Religion* jars on the ears of many persons, and a comparison of all the religions of the world, in which none can claim a privileged position, must seem to many reprehensible in

itself, because ignoring that peculiar reverence which everybody, down to the mere fetish worshipper, feels for his *own* religion and for his *own* God. Let me say then at once that I myself have shared these misgivings, but that I have tried to overcome them, because I would not and could not allow myself to surrender either what I hold to be the truth, or what I hold still dearer than the truth, the right tests of truth. Nor do I regret it. I do not say that the Science of Religion is all gain. No, it entails losses, and losses of many things which we hold dear. But this I will say, that, as far as my humble judgment goes, it does not entail the loss of anything that is essential to true religion, and that if we strike the balance honestly, the gain is immeasurably greater than the loss.

One of the first questions that was asked by classical scholars when invited to consider the value of the Science of Language, was 'What shall we gain by a comparative study of languages?' Languages, it was said, are wanted for practical purposes, for speaking and reading; and by studying too many languages at once, we run the risk of losing the firm grasp which we ought to have on the few that are really important. Our knowledge, by becoming wider, must needs, it was thought, become shallower, and the gain, if there is any, in knowing the structure of dialects which have never produced any literature at all, would certainly be outweighed by the loss in accurate and practical scholarship.

If this could be said of a comparative study of languages, with how much greater force will it be urged against a comparative study of religions! Though I do not expect that those who study the religious books of Brahmans and Buddhists, of Confucius and Lao-tse, of Mohammed and Nānak, will be accused of cherishing in their secret heart the doctrines of those ancient

masters, or of having lost the firm hold on their own religious convictions, yet I doubt whether the practical utility of wider studies in the vast field of the religions of the world will be admitted with greater readiness by professed theologians than the value of a knowledge of Sanskrit, Zend, Gothic, or Celtic for a thorough mastery of Greek and Latin, and for a real appreciation of the nature, the purpose, the laws, the growth and decay of language was admitted, or is even now admitted, by some of our most eminent professors and teachers.

People ask, What is gained by comparison?—Why, all higher knowledge is gained by comparison, and rests on comparison. If it is said that the character of scientific research in our age is pre-eminently comparative, this really means that our researches are now based on the widest evidence that can be obtained, on the broadest inductions that can be grasped by the human mind. What can be gained by comparison?—Why, look at the study of languages.—If you go back but a hundred years and examine the folios of the most learned writers on questions connected with language, and then open a book written by the merest tiro in Comparative Philology, you will see what can be gained, what has been gained, by the comparative method. A few hundred years ago, the idea that Hebrew was the original language of mankind was accepted as a matter of course, even as a matter of faith, the only problem being to find out by what process Greek, or Latin, or any other language could have been developed out of Hebrew. The idea, too, that language was revealed, in the scholastic sense of that word, was generally accepted, although, as early as the fourth century, St. Gregory, the learned bishop of Nyssa, had strongly protested against it. The grammatical framework of a language was either considered as the result of a con-

ventional agreement, or the terminations of nouns and verbs were supposed to have sprouted forth like buds from the roots and stems of language; and the vaguest similarity in the sound and meaning of words was taken to be a sufficient criterion for testing their origin and their relationship. Of all this philological somnambulism we hardly find a trace in works published since the days of Humboldt, Bopp, and Grimm. Has there been any loss here? Has it not been pure gain? Does language excite our admiration less, because we know that, though the faculty of speaking is the work of Him who has so framed our nature, the invention of words for naming each object was left to man, and was achieved through the working of the human mind? Is Hebrew less carefully studied, because it is no longer believed to be a revealed language sent down from heaven, but a language closely allied to Arabic, Syriac and ancient Babylonian, and receiving light from these cognate, and in some respects more primitive, languages, for the explanation of many of its grammatical forms, and for the exact interpretation of many of its obscure and difficult words? Is the grammatical articulation of Greek and Latin less instructive because instead of seeing in the terminations of nouns and verbs merely arbitrary signs to distinguish the singular from the plural, or the present from the future, we can now perceive an intelligible principle in the gradual production of formal out of the material elements of language? And are our etymologies less important, because, instead of being suggested by superficial similarities, they are now based on honest historical and physiological research? Lastly, has our own language ceased to hold its own peculiar place? Is our love for our own native tongue at all impaired? Do men speak less boldly or pray less fervently in their own mother tongue, because

they know its true origin and its unadorned history; or because they have discovered that in all languages, even in the jargons of the lowest savages, there is order and wisdom; there is in them something that makes the world akin?

Why, then, should we hesitate to apply the comparative method, which has produced such great results in other spheres of knowledge, to a study of religion? That it will change many of the views commonly held about the origin, the character, the growth, and decay of the religions of the world, I do not deny; but unless we hold that fearless progression in new enquiries, which is our bounden duty and our honest pride in all other branches of knowledge, is dangerous in the study of religions, unless we allow ourselves to be frightened by the once famous dictum, that whatever is new in theology is false, this ought to be the very reason why a comparative study of religions should no longer be neglected or delayed.

When the students of Comparative Philology boldly adopted Goethe's paradox, '*He who knows one language, knows none,*' people were startled at first, but they soon began to feel the truth which was hidden beneath the paradox. Could Goethe have meant that Homer did not know Greek, or that Shakespeare did not know English, because neither of them knew more than his own mother tongue? No! what was meant was that neither Homer nor Shakespeare knew what that language really was which he handled with so much power and cunning. Unfortunately the old verb '*to can,*' from which '*canny*' and '*cunning,*' is lost in English, otherwise we should be able in two words to express our meaning, and to keep apart the two kinds of knowledge of which we are here speaking. As we say in German *können* is not *kennen*, we might say in English *to can*, that is, to be cunning, is not *to ken*, that is, to

know; and it would then become clear at once that the most eloquent speaker and the most gifted poet, with all their command of words and skilful mastery of expression, would have but little to say if asked what language really is! The same applies to religion. *He who knows one, knows none.* There are thousands of people whose faith is such that it could move mountains, and who yet, if they were asked what religion really is, would remain silent, or would speak of outward tokens rather than of the inward nature, or of the faculty of faith.

It will be easily perceived that religion means at least two very different things. When we speak of the Jewish, or the Christian, or the Hindu religion, we mean a body of doctrines handed down by tradition, or in canonical books, and containing all that constitutes the faith of Jew, Christian, or Hindu. Using religion in that sense, we may say that a man has changed his religion, that is, that he has adopted the Christian instead of the Brahmanical body of religious doctrines, just as a man may learn to speak English instead of Hindustani. But religion is also used in a different sense. As there is a faculty of speech, independent of all historical forms of language, so we may speak of a faculty of faith in man, independent of all historical religions. If we say that it is religion which distinguishes man from the animal, we do not mean the Christian or Jewish religions only; we do not mean any special religion, but we mean a mental faculty, that faculty which, independent of, nay, in spite of sense and reason, enables man to apprehend the Infinite under different names and under varying disguises. Without that faculty, no religion, not even the lowest worship of idols and fetishes, would be possible; and if we will but listen attentively, we can hear in all religions a groaning of the spirit, a struggle to conceive

the inconceivable, to utter the unutterable, a longing after the Infinite, a love of God. Whether the etymology which the ancients gave of the Greek word *ἄνθρωπος*, man, be true or not (they derived it from *ὁ ἄνω ἄνθρωπ*, he who looks upward): certain it is that what makes man to be man, is that he alone can turn his face to heaven; certain it is that he alone yearns for something that neither sense nor reason can supply.

If, then, there is a philosophical discipline which examines into the conditions of sensuous perception, and if there is another philosophical discipline which examines into the conditions of rational conception, there is clearly a place for a third philosophical discipline that has to examine into the conditions of that third faculty the mind, co-ordinate with sense and reason, the faculty of perceiving the Infinite, which is at the root of all religion. In German we can distinguish that third faculty by the name of *Vernunft*, as opposed to *Verstand*, reason, and *Sinne*, sense. In English I know no better name for it, than the faculty of faith, though it will have to be guarded by careful definition, and to be restricted to those objects only, which cannot be supplied either by the evidence of the senses, or by the evidence of reason. No simply historical fact can ever fall under the cognisance of faith.

If we look at the history of modern thought, we find that the dominant school of philosophy, previous to Kant, had reduced all intellectual activity to *one* faculty, that of the senses. '*Nihil in intellectu quod non ante fuerit in sensu*.'—'Nothing exists in the intellect but what has before existed in the senses,' was their watchword; and Leibniz answered it epigrammatically, but most profoundly, '*Nihil—nisi intellectus.*' 'Yes, nothing but the intellect.' Then followed Kant, who, in his great work written ninety years ago, but

not yet antiquated, proved that our knowledge requires the admission of two independent faculties, the intuitions of the senses, and the categories, or, as we might call them, the necessities of reason. But satisfied with having established the independent faculty of reason, as co-ordinate with the faculty of sense, or to use his own technical language, satisfied with having proved the possibility of apodictic judgments *a priori*, Kant declined to go further, and denied to the intellect the power of transcending the finite, the faculty of approaching the Divine. He closed the ancient gates through which man had gazed into Infinity, but, in spite of himself, he was driven in his *Critique of Practical Reason*, to open a side-door through which to admit the sense of duty, and with it the sense of the Divine. This is the vulnerable point in Kant's philosophy, and if philosophy has to explain the positive realities of thought, there will be and can be no rest till we admit, what cannot be denied, that there is in man a third faculty, which I call simply the faculty of apprehending the Infinite, not only in religion, but in all things; a power independent of sense and reason, a power in a certain sense contradicted by sense and reason, but yet, I suppose, a very real power, if we see how it has held its own from the beginning of the world, how neither sense nor reason have been able to overcome it, while it alone is able to overcome both reason and sense.

According to the two meanings of the word religion, then, the science of religion is divided into two parts: the former, which has to deal with the historical forms of religion, is called *Comparative Theology*; the latter, which has to explain the conditions under which religion, in its highest or its lowest form, is possible, is called *Theoretic Theology*.

We shall at present have to deal with the former only; nay, it will be my object to show that the problems

which chiefly occupy theoretic theology ought not to be taken up till all the evidence that can possibly be gained from a comparative study of the religions of the world has been fully collected, classified, and analysed.

It may seem strange that while theoretic theology, or the analysis of the inward and outward conditions under which faith is possible, has occupied so many thinkers, the study of comparative theology has never as yet been seriously taken in hand. But the explanation is very simple. The materials on which alone a comparative study of the religions of mankind could have been founded were not accessible in former days, while in our own days they have come to light in such profusion as almost to challenge these more comprehensive enquiries into the history of religious thought.

It is well known that the Emperor Akbar had a passion for the study of religions, so that he invited to his court Jews, Christians, Mohammedans, Brahmans, and Fire-worshippers, and had as many of their sacred books as he could get access to, translated for his own study. Yet, how small was the collection of sacred books that even an Emperor of India could command not more than 250 years ago, compared to what may now be found in the library of every poor scholar! We have the original text of the Veda, which neither the bribes nor the threats of Akbar could extort from the Brahmans. The translation of the Veda which he is said to have obtained was a translation of the so-called Atharva-veda, and comprised most likely the Upanishads only, mystic and philosophical treatises, very interesting, very important in themselves, but as far removed from the ancient poetry of the Veda as the Talmud is from the Old Testament, as Sufism is from the Koran. We have the Zendavesta, the sacred writings of the so-called fire-wor

shippers, and we possess translations of it, far more complete and far more correct than any that the Emperor Akbar could have obtained. The religion of Buddha, certainly in many respects more important than either Brahmanism, or Zoroastrianism, or Mohammedanism, is never mentioned in the religious discussions that took place one evening in every week at the imperial court of Delhi. Abufazl, it is said, the minister of Akbar, could find no one to assist him in his enquiries respecting Buddhism. We possess the whole sacred canon of the Buddhists in various languages, in Pāli, in Sanskrit, in Burmese, Siamese, Tibetan, Mongolian, and Chinese, and it is our fault entirely, if as yet there is no complete translation in any European tongue of this important collection of sacred books. The ancient religions of China again, that of Confucius and that of Laotse, may now be studied in excellent translations of their sacred books by anybody interested in the ancient faith of mankind.

But this is not all. We owe to missionaries particularly, careful accounts of the religious belief and worship among tribes far lower in the scale of civilisation than the poets of the Vedic hymns, or the followers of Confucius. Though the belief of African and Melanesian savages is more recent in point of time, it represents an earlier and far more primitive phase in point of growth, and is therefore as instructive to the student of religion as the study of uncultivated dialects has proved to the student of language.

Lastly, and this, I believe, is the most important advantage which we enjoy as students of the history of religion, we have been taught the rules of critical scholarship. No one would venture, now-a-days, to quote from any book, whether sacred or profane, without having asked these simple and yet momentous questions: When was it written? Where? and by whom?

Was the author an eye-witness, or does he only relate what he has heard from others? And if the latter, were his authorities at least contemporaneous with the events which they relate, and were they under the sway of party feeling or any other disturbing influence? Was the whole book written at once, or does it contain portions of an earlier date; and if so, is it possible for us to separate these earlier documents from the body of the book?

A study of the original documents on which the principal religions of the world profess to be founded, carried out in this spirit, has enabled some of our best living scholars to distinguish in each religion between what is really ancient and what is comparatively modern; what was the doctrine of the founders and their immediate disciples, and what were the afterthoughts and, generally, the corruptions of later ages. A study of these later developments, of these later corruptions, or, it may be, improvements, is not without its own peculiar charms, and full of practical lessons; yet, as it is essential that we should know the most ancient forms of every language, before we proceed to any comparisons, it is indispensable that we should have a clear conception of the most primitive form of every religion before we proceed to determine its own value, and to compare it with other forms of religious faith. Many an orthodox Mohammedan, for instance, will relate miracles wrought by Mohammed; but in the Koran Mohammed says distinctly that he is a man like other men. He disdains to work miracles, and appeals to the great works of Allah, the rising and setting of the sun, the rain that fructifies the earth, the plants that grow, and the living souls that are born into the world—who can tell whence?—as the real signs and wonders in the eyes of a true believer.

The Buddhist legends teem with

miserable miracles attributed to Buddha and his disciples—miracles which in wonderfulness certainly surpass the miracles of any other religion: yet in their own sacred canon a saying of Buddha's is recorded, prohibiting his disciples from working miracles, though challenged by the multitudes who required a sign that they might believe. And what is the miracle that Buddha commands his disciples to perform? 'Hide your good deeds,' he says, 'and confess before the world the sins you have committed.'

Modern Hinduism rests on the system of caste as on a rock which no arguments can shake: but in the Veda, the highest authority of the religious belief of the Hindus, no mention occurs of the complicated system of castes, such as we find it in Manu: nay, in one place, where the ordinary classes of the Indian, or any other society, are alluded to, viz. the priests, the warriors, the citizens, and the slaves, all are represented as sprung alike from Brahman, the source of all being.

It would be too much to say that the critical sifting of the authorities for a study of each religion has been already fully carried out. There is work enough still to be done. But a beginning, and a very successful beginning, has been made, and the results thus brought to light will serve as a wholesome caution to everybody who is engaged in religious researches. Thus, if we study the primitive religion of the Veda, we have to distinguish most carefully, not only between the hymns of the Rig-Veda on one side, and the hymns collected in the Sâma-veda, Yagur-veda, and Atharva-veda on the other, but critical scholars would distinguish with equal care between the more ancient and the more modern hymns of the Rig-Veda, as far as even the faintest indications of language, of grammar, or metre enable them to do so.

In order to gain a clear insight into the motives and impulses of the founder of the worship of Ahura-mazda, we must chiefly, if not entirely, depend on those portions of the Zendavesta which are written in the Gâthâ dialect, a more primitive dialect than that of the rest of the sacred code of the Zoroastrians.

In order to do justice to Buddha, we must not mix the practical portions of the Tripitaka, the Dharma, with the metaphysical portions, the Abhidharma. Both, it is true, belong to the sacred canon of the Buddhists; but their original sources lie in very different latitudes of religious thought.

We have in the history of Buddhism an excellent opportunity for watching the process by which a canon of sacred books is called into existence. We see here, as elsewhere, that during the lifetime of the teacher, no record of events, no sacred code containing the sayings of the master was wanted. His presence was enough, and thoughts of the future, and more particularly, of future greatness, seldom entered the minds of those who followed him. It was only after Buddha had left the world to enter into Nirvâna, that his disciples attempted to recall the sayings and doings of their departed friend and master. At that time everything that seemed to redound to the glory of Buddha, however extraordinary and incredible, was eagerly welcomed, while witnesses who would have ventured to criticise or reject unsupported statements, or to detract in any way from the holy character of Buddha, had no chance of even being listened to. And when, in spite of all this, differences of opinion arose, they were not brought to the test by a careful weighing of evidence, but the names of 'unbeliever' and 'heretic' (nâstika, pâshanda) were quickly invented in India as elsewhere, and bandied backwards and forwards between contending par-

ties, till at last, when the doctors disagreed, the help of the secular power had to be invoked, and kings and emperors convoked councils for the suppression of schism, for the settlement of an orthodox creed, and for the completion of a sacred canon. We know of King Asoka, the contemporary of Seleucus, sending his royal missive to the assembled elders, and telling them what to do, and what to avoid, warning them also in his own name of the apocryphal or heretical character of certain books, which, as he thinks, ought not to be admitted into the sacred canon.

We here learn a lesson, which is confirmed by the study of other religions, that canonical books, though they furnish in most cases the most ancient and most authentic information within the reach of the student of religion, are not to be trusted implicitly, nay, that they must be submitted to a more searching criticism and to more stringent tests than any other historical books. For that purpose the Science of Language has proved in many cases a most valuable auxiliary. It is not easy to imitate ancient language so as to deceive the practised eye of the grammarian, even if it were possible to imitate ancient thought that should not betray to the historian its modern origin. A forged book, like the Ezour Veda, which deceived even Voltaire, and was published by him as 'the most precious gift for which the West was indebted to the East,' could hardly impose again on any Sanskrit scholar of the present day. This most precious gift from the East to the West is about the silliest book that can be read by the student of religion, and all one can say in its defence is that the original writer never meant it as a forgery, never intended it for the purpose for which it was used by Voltaire. I may add that a book which has lately attracted considerable attention, *La Bible dans l'Inde*, by M. Jacolliot,

belongs to the same class of books. Though the passages from the sacred books of the Brahmins are not given in the original, but only in a very poetical French translation, no Sanskrit scholar would hesitate for one moment to say that they are forgeries, and that M. Jacolliot, the President of the Court of Justice at Chandernagore, has been deceived by his native teacher. We find many childish and foolish things in the Veda, but when we read the following line, as an extract from the Veda—

La femme c'est l'âme de l'humanité—

it is not difficult to see that this is the folly of the nineteenth century, and not of the childhood of the human race. M. Jacolliot's conclusions and theories are such as might be expected from his materials.

With all the genuine documents for studying the history of the religions of mankind that have lately been brought to light, and with the great facilities which a more extensive study of Oriental languages has afforded to scholars at large for investigating the deepest springs of religious thought all over the world, a comparative study of religions has become a necessity. A science of religion, based on a comparison of all, or, at all events, of the most important, religions of mankind, is now a question of time only. It is demanded by those whose voice cannot be disregarded. Its title, though implying as yet a promise rather than a fulfilment, has become more or less familiar in Germany, France, and America; its great problems have attracted the eyes of many enquirers, and its results have been anticipated either with fear or with delight. It becomes the duty of those who have devoted their life to the study of the principal religions of the world in their original documents, and who value religion and reverence it in whatever form it may present itself, to take possession of this new territory in the

name of true science, and thus to protect its sacred precincts from the inroads of mere babblers. Those who would use a comparative study of religions as a means for debasing Christianity by exalting the other religions of mankind, are to my mind as dangerous allies as those who think it necessary to debase all other religions in order to exalt Christianity. Science wants no partisans. I make no secret that true Christianity seems to me to become more and more exalted the more we know and the more we appreciate the treasures of truth hidden in the despised religions of the world. But no one can honestly arrive at that conviction, unless he uses honestly the same measure for all religions. It would be fatal for any religion to claim an exceptional treatment, most of all for Christianity. Christianity enjoyed no privileges and claimed no immunities when it boldly confronted and confounded the most ancient and the most powerful religions of the world. Even at present it craves no mercy, and it receives no mercy from those whom our missionaries have to meet face to face in every part of the world; and unless our religion has ceased to be what it was, its defenders should not shrink from this new trial of strength, but should encourage rather than deprecate the study of comparative theology.

And let me remark this, in the very beginning, that no other religion, with the exception, perhaps, of early Buddhism, would have favoured the idea of an impartial comparison of the principal religions of the world—would have tolerated our science. Nearly every religion seems to adopt the language of the Pharisee rather than of the publican. It is Christianity alone which, as the religion of humanity, as the religion of no caste, of no chosen people, has taught us to respect the history of humanity, as a whole, to discover

the traces of a divine wisdom and love in the government of all the races of mankind, and to recognise, if possible, even in the lowest and crudest forms of religious belief, not the work of demoniacal agencies, but something that indicates a divine guidance, something that makes us perceive, with St. Peter, 'that God is no respecter of persons, but that in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him.'

In no religion was there a soil so well prepared for the cultivation of Comparative Theology as in our own. The position which Christianity from the very beginning took up with regard to Judaism, served as the first lesson in comparative theology, and directed the attention even of the unlearned to a comparison of two religions, differing in their conception of the Deity, in their estimate of humanity, in their motives of morality, and in their hope of immortality, yet sharing so much in common that there are but few of the psalms and prayers in the Old Testament in which a Christian cannot heartily join even now, and but few rules of morality which he ought not even now to obey. If we have once learnt to see in the exclusive religion of the Jews a preparation of what was to be the all-embracing religion of humanity, we shall feel much less difficulty in recognising in the mazes of other religions a hidden purpose; a wandering in the desert, it may be, but a preparation also for the land of promise.

A study of these two religions, the Jewish and the Christian, such as it has long been carried on by some of our most learned divines, simultaneously with the study of Greek and Roman mythology, has, in fact, served as a most useful preparation for wider enquiries. Even the mistakes that have been committed by earlier scholars have proved useful to those who followed after; and, once corrected, they are

not likely to be committed again. The opinion, for instance, that the pagan religions were mere corruptions of the religion of the Old Testament, once supported by men of high authority and great learning, is now as completely surrendered as the attempts of explaining Greek and Latin as corruptions of Hebrew. The theory again, that there was a primeval preternatural revelation granted to the fathers of the human race, and that the grains of truth which catch our eye when exploring the temples of heathen idols, are the scattered fragments of that sacred heirloom—the seeds that fell by the wayside or upon stony places—would find but few supporters at present; no more, in fact, than the theory that there was in the beginning one complete and perfect primeval language, broken up in later times into the numberless languages of the world.

Some other principles, too, have been established within this limited sphere by a comparison of Judaism and Christianity with the religions of Greece and Rome, which will prove extremely useful in guiding us in our own researches. It has been proved, for instance, that the language of antiquity is not like the language of our own times; that the language of the East is not like the language of the West; and that, unless we make allowance for this, we cannot but misinterpret the utterances of the most ancient teachers and poets of the human race. The same words do not mean the same thing in Anglo-Saxon and English, in Latin and French: much less can we expect that the words of any modern language should be the exact equivalents of an ancient Semitic language, such as the Hebrew of the Old Testament.

Ancient words and ancient thoughts, for both go together, have not yet arrived at that stage of abstraction in which, for instance, active powers, whether natural or supernatural, can be represented in

any but a personal and more or less human form. When we speak of a temptation from within or from without, it was more natural for the ancients to speak of a tempter, whether in a human or in an animal form; when we speak of the ever-present help of God, they call the Lord their rock and their fortress, their buckler and their high tower; what with us is a heavenly message, or a godsend, was to them a winged messenger; what we call divine guidance, they speak of as a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way, and a pillar of light to give them light; a refuge from the storm, and a shadow from the heat. What is really meant is no doubt the same, and the fault is ours, not theirs, if we wilfully misinterpret the language of ancient prophets, if we persist in understanding their words in their outward and material aspect only, and forget that before language had sanctioned a distinction between the concrete and the abstract, between the purely spiritual as opposed to the coarsely material, the intention of the speakers comprehended both the concrete and the abstract, both the material and the spiritual, in a manner which has become quite strange to us, though it lives on in the language of every true poet. Unless we make allowance for this mental parallax, all our readings in the ancient skies will be, and must be, erroneous. Nay, I believe it can be proved that more than half of the difficulties in the history of religious thought owe their origin to this constant misinterpretation of ancient language by modern language, of ancient thought by modern thought.

That much of what seems to us, and seemed to the best among the ancients, irrational and irreverent in the mythologies of India, Greece, and Italy can thus be removed, and that many of their childish fables can thus be read again in their original child-like sense, has been

proved by the researches of Comparative Mythologists. The phase of language which gives rise, inevitably, we may say, to these misunderstandings, is earlier than the earliest literary documents. Its work in the Aryan languages was done before the time of the Veda, before the time of Homer, though its influence continues to be felt to a much later period.

Is it likely that the Semitic languages, and, more particularly, Hebrew, should, as by a miracle, have escaped the influence of a process which is inherent in the very nature and growth of language, which, in fact, may rightly be called an infantine disease, against which no precautions can be of any avail?

And if it is not, are we likely to lose anything if we try to get at the most ancient, the most original intention of sacred traditions, instead of being satisfied with their later aspect, their modern misinterpretations? Have we lost anything if, while reading the story of Hephaestus splitting open with his axe the head of Zeus, and Athene springing from it full armed, we perceive behind this savage imagery, Zeus as the bright Sky, his forehead as the East, Hephaestus as the young, not yet risen Sun, and Athene as the Dawn, the daughter of the Sky, stepping forth from the fountain-head of light—

Γλαυκῶπις, with eyes like an owl
(and beautiful they are);

Παρθένος, pure as a virgin;

Χρυσέα, the golden;

Ἀκρία, lighting up the tops of the mountains, and her own glorious Parthenon in her own favourite town of Athens;

Παλλάς, whirling the shafts of light;

Ἀλέα, the genial warmth of the morning;

Πρόμαχος, the foremost champion in the battle between night and day;

Πάνοπλος, in full armour, in her

panoply of light, driving away the darkness of night, and awakening men to a bright life, to bright thoughts, to bright endeavours.

Would the Greeks have had less reverence for their gods if, instead of believing that Apollon and Artemis murdered the twelve children of Niobe, they had perceived that Niobe was, in a former period of language, a name of snow and winter, and that no more was intended by the ancient poet than that Apollo and Artemis, the vernal deities, must slay every year with their darts the brilliant and beautiful but doomed children of the Snow? Is it not something worth knowing—worth knowing even to us after the lapse of four or five thousand years, that before the separation of the Aryan race, before the existence of Sanskrit, Greek, or Latin, before the gods of the Veda had been worshipped, and before there was a sanctuary of Zeus among the sacred oaks of Dodona, one supreme deity had been found, had been named, had been invoked by the ancestors of our race, and had been invoked by a name which has never been excelled by any other name?

No, if a critical examination of the ancient language of the Jews leads to no worse results than those which have followed from a careful interpretation of the petrified language of ancient India and Greece, we need not fear; we shall be gainers, not losers. Like an old precious medal, the ancient religion, after the rust of ages has been removed, will come out in all its purity and brightness: and the image which it discloses will be the image of the Father, the Father of all the nations upon earth; and the superscription, when we can read it again, will be, not only in Judæa, but in the languages of all the races of the world, the Word of God, revealed, where alone it can be revealed—revealed in the heart of man.

SECOND LECTURE.

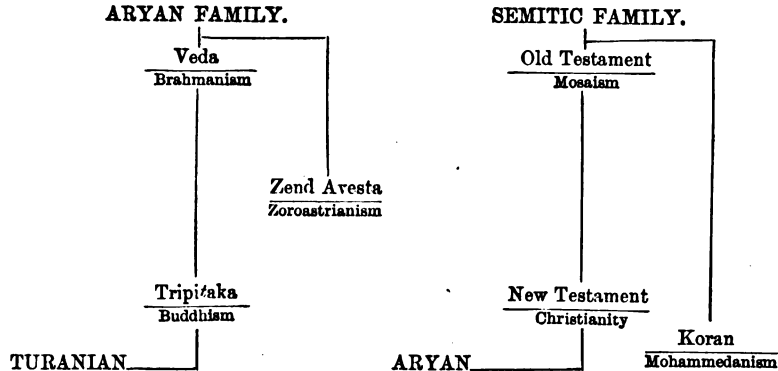
Delivered at the Royal Institution, February 26, 1870.

THERE is no lack of materials, and there is abundance of work for the student of the Science of Religion. It is true that, compared with the number of languages which the comparative philologist has to deal with, the number of religions is small. In a comparative study of languages, however, we find most of our materials ready for use; we possess grammars and dictionaries. But where are we to look for the grammars and dictionaries of the principal religions of the world? Not in the catechisms, or the articles, not even in the so-called creeds or confessions of faith which, if they do not give us an actual misrepresentation of the doctrines which they profess to epitomise, give us always the shadow only, and never the soul and substance of a religion. But how seldom do we find even such helps!

Among Eastern nations it is not unusual to distinguish between religions that are founded on a book, and others that have no such vouchers to produce. The former are considered more respectable, and, though they may contain false doctrine, they are looked upon as a kind of aristocracy among the vulgar and nondescript crowd of bookless or illiterate religions.

To the student of religion canonical books are, no doubt, of the utmost importance, though he ought never to forget that nearly all canonical books give the reflected image only of the real doctrines of the founder of a new religion, an image always blurred and distorted by the medium through which it

had to pass. But how few are the religions which possess even a sacred canon, how small is the aristocracy of real book-religions in the history of the world! Let us look at the two families that have been the principal actors in that great drama which we call the history of the world, the *Aryan* and the *Semitic*, and we shall find that two members only of each family can claim the possession of a sacred code. Among the *Aryans*, the *Hindus* and the *Persians*; among the *Shemites*, the *Hebrews* and the *Arabs*. In the Aryan family the *Hindus*, in the Semitic family the *Hebrews*, have each produced two book-religions; the *Hindus* have given rise to Brahmanism and Buddhism; the *Hebrews* to Mosaism and Christianity. Nay, it is important to observe that in each family the third book-religion can hardly lay claim to an independent origin, but is only a weaker repetition of the first. Zoroastrianism has its sources in the same stratum which fed the deeper and broader stream of Vedic religion; Mohammedanism springs, as far as its most vital doctrines are concerned, from the ancient fountain-head of the religion of Abraham, the worshipper and the friend of the one true God. If you keep before your mind the following simple outline, you can see at one glance the river-system in which the religious thought of the Aryan and the Semitic nations has been running for centuries—of those, at least, who are in possession of sacred and canonical books.



While Buddhism is the direct offspring, and, at the same time, the antagonist of Brahmanism, Zoroastrianism is rather a deviation from the straight course of ancient Vedic faith, though it likewise contains a protest against some of the doctrines of the earliest worshippers of the Vedic gods. The same, or nearly the same relationship holds together the three principal religions of the Semitic stock, only that, chronologically, Mohammedanism is later than Christianity, while Zoroastrianism is earlier than Buddhism.

Observe also another, and, as we shall see, by no means accidental coincidence in the parallel ramifications of these two religious stems.

Buddhism, which is the offspring of, but at the same time marks a reaction against the ancient Brahmanism of India, withered away after a time on the soil from which it had sprung, and assumed its real importance only after it had been transplanted from India, and struck root among Turanian nations in the very centre of the Asiatic continent. Buddhism, being at its birth an Aryan religion, ended by becoming the principal religion of the Turanian world.

The same transference took place in the second stem. Christianity, being the offspring of Mosaism, was rejected by the Jews as Buddhism was by the Brahmans. It failed to fulfil its purpose as a mere reform

of the ancient Jewish religion, and not till it had been transferred from Semitic to Aryan ground, from the Jews to the Gentiles, did it develop its real nature and assume its world-wide importance. Having been at its birth a Semitic religion, it became the principal religion of the Aryan world.

There is one other nation only, outside the pale of the Aryan and Semitic families, which can claim one, or even two book-religions as its own. China became the mother, at almost the same time, of two religions, each founded on a sacred code—the religion of Confucius, and the religion of Lao-tse, the former resting on the Five King and the Four Shu, the latter on the Tao-te-king.

With these eight religions the library of the Sacred Books of the whole human race is complete, and an accurate study of these eight codes, written in Sanskrit, Pāli, and Zend, in Hebrew, Greek, and Arabic, lastly in Chinese, might in itself not seem too formidable an undertaking for a single scholar. Yet, let us begin at home, and look at the enormous literature devoted to the interpretation of the Old Testament, at the number of books published every year on controverted points in the doctrine or the history of the Gospels, and you may then form an idea of what a theological library would be that should

contain the necessary materials for an accurate and scholar-like interpretation of the eight sacred codes. Even in so modern, and, in the beginning, at least, so illiterate a religion as that of Mohammed, the sources that have to be consulted for the history of the faith during the early centuries of its growth are so abundant, that few critical scholars could master them in their completeness.¹

If we turn our eyes to the Aryan religions, the sacred writings of the Brahmins, in the narrowest acceptance of the word, might seem within easy grasp. The hymns of the Rig-Veda, which are the real bible of the ancient faith of the Vedic Rishis, are only 1,028 in number, consisting of about 10,580 verses.² The commentary, however, on these hymns, of which I have published four good-sized quarto volumes, is estimated at 100,000 lines, consisting of 32 syllables each, that is at 3,200,000 syllables. There are besides, the three minor Vedas, the Yagurveda, the Sâma-veda, the Atharvaveda, which, though of less importance for religious doctrines, are indispensable for a right appreciation of the sacrificial and ceremonial system of the worshippers of the ancient Vedic gods.

To each of these four Vedas belong collections of so-called *Brâhmanas*, scholastic treatises of a later time, it is true, but nevertheless written in archaic Sanskrit, and reckoned by every orthodox Hindu as part of his revealed literature. Their bulk is much larger than that of the ancient Vedic hymn-books.

And all this constitutes the text only for numberless treatises, essays, manuals, glosses, &c., forming an uninterrupted chain of theological literature, extending over more than three thousand years, and receiving new links even at the present time. There are, besides, the inevitable parasites of theological literature, the controversial writings of different schools of thought and faith, all claiming to be orthodox, yet differing from each other like day and night; and lastly, the compositions of writers, professedly unorthodox, professedly at variance with the opinions of the majority, declared enemies of the Brahmanic faith and the Brahmanic priesthood, whose accusations and insinuations, whose sledge-hammers of argument, and whose poisoned arrows of invective need fear no comparison with the weapons of theological warfare in any other country.

Nor can we exclude the sacred law-books, nor the ancient epic poems, the Mahâbhârata and Râmâyana, nor the more modern, yet sacred literature of India, the Purânas and Tantras, if we wish to gain an insight into the religious belief of millions of human beings, who though they all acknowledge the Veda as their supreme authority in matters of faith, yet are unable to understand one single line of it, and in their daily life depend entirely for spiritual food on the teaching conveyed to them by these more recent and more popular books. And even then our eye would not have reached many of the sacred

¹ Sprenger, *Das Leben des Mohammed*, vol. i. p. 9.

² Die Quellen, die ich benutzt habe, sind so zahlreich, und der Zustand der Gelehrsamkeit war unter den Moslimen in ihrer Urzeit von dem unsrigen so verschieden, dass die Materialien, die ich über die Quellen gesammelt habe, ein ziemlich beleibtes Bändchen bilden werden. Es ist in der That nothwendig, die Literaturgeschichte des Islâm der ersten zwei Jahrhunderte zu schreiben, um den Leser in den Stand zu setzen, den hier gesammelten kritischen Apparat zu benutzen. Ich gedenke die Resultate meiner Forschungen als ein separates Werkchen nach der Prophetenbiographie herauszugeben.

² Max Müller, *History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, p. 220.

recesses in which the Hindu mind has taken refuge, either to meditate on the great problem of life, or to free itself from the temptations and fetters of worldly existence by penances and mortifications of the most exquisite cruelty. India has always been teeming with religious sects, and as far as we can look back into the history of that marvellous country, its religious life has been broken up into countless local centres which it required all the ingenuity and perseverance of a priestly caste to hold together with a semblance of dogmatic uniformity. Some of these sects may almost claim the title of independent religions, as, for instance, the once famous sect of the Sikhs, possessing their own sacred code and their own priesthood, and threatening for a time to become a formidable rival of Brahmanism and Mohammedanism in India. Political circumstances gave to the sect of Nānak its historical prominence and more lasting fame. To the student of religion it is but one out of many sects which took their origin in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and attempted to replace the corruptions of Hinduism and Mohammedanism by a purer and more spiritual worship. The Granth, i.e. the Volume, the sacred book of the Sikhs, is full of interest, full of really deep and poetical thought: and it is to be hoped that it will soon find an English translator. But there are other collections of religious poetry, more ancient and more original than the stanzas of Nānak; nay, many of the most beautiful verses of the Granth were borrowed from these earlier authorities, particularly from Kabir, the pupil of Rāmānand. Here there is enough to occupy the students of religion: an intellectual flora of greater variety and profuseness

than even the natural flora of that fertile country.

And yet we have not said a word as yet of the second book-religion of India—of the religion of Buddha, originally one only out of numberless sects, but possessing a vitality which has made its branches to overshadow the largest portion of the inhabited globe. Who can say—I do not speak of European scholars only, but of the most learned members of the Buddhist fraternities—who can say that he has read the whole of the canonical books of the Buddhist Church, to say nothing of their commentaries or later treatises? The text and commentaries of the Buddhist canon contain, according to a statement in the *Saddharma-alaṅkāra*,¹ 29,368,000 letters. Such statements do not convey to our mind any very definite idea, nor could any scholar vouch for their absolute correctness. But if we consider that the English Bible is said to contain about three millions and a half of letters² (and here vowels are counted separately from consonants), five or six times that amount would hardly seem enough, as a rough estimate of the bulk of the Buddhist scriptures. The Tibetan edition of the Buddhist canon, consisting of two collections, the *Kanjur* and *Tanjur*, numbers about 325 volumes folio, each weighing in the Pekin edition from four to five pounds.³

Apparently within a smaller compass lies the sacred literature of the third of the Aryan book-religions, the so-called *Zend-Avesta*. But here the very scantiness of the ancient text increases the difficulty of its successful interpretation, and the absence of native commentaries has thrown nearly the whole burden of deciphering on the patience and ingenuity of European scholars.

¹ Spence Hardy, *The Legends and Theories of the Buddhists*, p. 66.

² 3,567,180.

³ *Chips from a German Workshop*, vol. i. p. 193.

If lastly we turn to China, we find that the religion of Confucius is founded on the Five King and the Four Shu—books in themselves of considerable extent, and surrounded by voluminous commentaries, without which even the most learned scholars would not venture to fathom the depth of their sacred canon.¹

Lao-tse, the contemporary or rather the senior of Confucius, is reported to have written a large number of books:² no less than 930 on different questions of faith, morality, and worship, and 70 on magic. His principal work, however, the Tao-te-king, which represents the real scripture of his followers, the Tao-sse, consists only of about 5,000 words,³ and fills no more than thirty pages. But here again we find that for that very reason the text is unintelligible without copious commentaries, so that M. Julien had to consult more than sixty commentators for the purpose of his translation, the earliest going back as far as the year 163 B.C.

There is a third established religion in China, that of Fo; but Fo is only the Chinese corruption of Buddha, and though the religion of Buddha, as transferred from India to China, has assumed a peculiar character and produced an enormous literature of its own, yet Chinese Buddhism cannot be called an independent religion, any more than Buddhism in Ceylon, Burmah, and Siam, or in Nepal, Tibet, and Mongolia.

But after we have collected this library of the sacred books of the world with their indispensable commentaries, are we then in possession of the requisite materials for studying the growth and decay of the

religious convictions of mankind at large? Far from it. The largest portion of mankind,—ay, and some of the most valiant champions in the religious and intellectual struggles of the world, would be unrepresented in our theological library. Think only of the Greeks and the Romans; think of the Teutonic, the Celtic and Slavonic nations! Where are we to gain an insight into what we may call their real religious convictions, previous to the comparatively recent period when their ancient temples were levelled to the ground to make room for new cathedrals; and their sacred oaks were felled to be changed into crosses, planted along every mountain pass and forest lane? Homer and Hesiod do not tell us what was the religion, the real heart-religion of the Greeks, nor were their own poems ever considered as sacred, or even as authoritative and binding, by the highest intellects among the Greeks. In Rome we have not even an Iliad or Odyssey; and when we ask for the religious worship of the Teutonic, the Celtic, or the Slavonic tribes, the very names of many of the deities in whom they believed are forgotten and lost for ever, and the scattered notices of their faith have to be picked up and put together like the small stones of a broken mosaic that once formed the pavement in the ruined temples of Rome.

The same gaps, the same want of representative authorities, which we witness among the Aryan, we meet again among the Semitic nations, as soon as we step out of the circle of their book-religions. The Babylonians, the Phenicians and Carthaginians, the Arabs before their conversion to Mohammedanism, all are

¹ *The Chinese Classics*, with a Translation, Notes, Prolegomena, and Indexes. By James Legge, D.D.; 7 vols. London: Trübner & Co.

² Stan. Julien, *Tao te king*, p. xxvii.

³ Julien, *Tao te king*, p. xxxi., xxxv. The texts vary from 5,610, 5,630, 5,688 to 5,722 words. The text published by M. Stan. Julien consists of 5,320 words.

without canonical books, and a knowledge of their religion has to be gathered, as well as may be, from monuments, inscriptions, traditions, from proper names, from proverbs, from curses, and other stray notices which require the greatest care before they can be properly sifted and successfully fitted together.

But now let us go on further. The two beds in which the stream of Aryan and Semitic thought has been rolling on for centuries from south-east to north-west, from the Indus to the Thames, from the Euphrates to the Jordan and the Mediterranean, cover but a narrow tract of country compared with the vastness of our globe. As we rise higher, our horizon expands on every side, and wherever there are traces of human life there are traces also of religion. Along the shores of the ancient Nile we see still standing the Pyramids, and the ruins of temples and labyrinths, their walls covered with hieroglyphic inscriptions, and with the strange pictures of gods and goddesses. On rolls of papyrus, which seem to defy the ravages of time, we have even fragments of what may be called the sacred books of the Egyptians. Yet though much has been deciphered in the ancient records of that mysterious race, the main spring of the religion of Egypt and the original intention of its ceremonial worship are far from being fully disclosed to us. As we follow the sacred stream to its distant sources the whole continent of Africa opens before us, and wherever we now see kraals and cattle-pens, depend upon it there was to be seen once, or there is to be seen even now, the smoke of sacrifices rising up from earth to heaven. The ancient relics of African faith are rapidly disappearing at the approach of Mohammedan and Christian missionaries; but what has been preserved of it, chiefly

through the exertions of learned missionaries, is full of interest to the student of religion, with its strange worship of snakes and ancestors, its vague hope of a future life, and its not altogether faded reminiscence of a Supreme God, the Father of the black as well as of the white man.

From the eastern coast of Africa our eye is carried across the sea where, from Madagascar to Hawaii, island after island stands out like so many pillars of a sunken bridge that once spanned the Indian and Pacific oceans. Everywhere, whether among the dark Papuan or the yellowish Malay, or the brown Polynesian races scattered on these islands, even among the lowest of the low in the scale of humanity, there are, if we will but listen, whisperings about divine beings, imaginings of a future life; there are prayers and sacrifices which, even in their most degraded and degrading form, still bear witness to that old and ineradicable faith that everywhere there is a God to hear our prayers, if we will but call on Him, and to accept our offerings, if they are offered as a ransom for sin or as a token of a grateful heart.

Still farther east the double continent of America becomes visible, and in spite of the unchristian vandalism of its first discoverers and conquerors, there, too, we find materials for the study of an ancient, and, it would seem, independent faith. Unfortunately, the religious and mythological traditions, collected by the first Europeans who came in contact with the natives of America, reach back but a short distance beyond the time when they were written down, and they seem in several cases to reflect the thoughts of the Spanish listeners as much as those of the native narrators. The quaint hieroglyphic manuscripts of Mexico and Guatemala have as yet told us very little, and the accounts written by natives

in their native language have to be used with great caution. Still the ancient religion of the Aztecs of Mexico and of the Incas of Peru is full of interesting problems. As we advance towards the north and its red-skinned inhabitants our information becomes more meagre still, and after what happened some years ago, no *Livre des Sauvages* is likely to come to our assistance again. Yet there are wild and home-grown specimens of religious faith to be studied even now among the receding and gradually perishing tribes of the Red Indians, and, in their languages as well as in their religions, traces may possibly still be found, before it is too late, of pre-historic migrations of men from the primitive Asiatic to the American continent, either across the stepping-stones of the Aleutic bridge in the north, or lower south by drifting with favourable winds from island to island till the hardy canoe was landed or wrecked on the American coast, never to return again to the Asiatic home from which it had started.

And when in our religious survey we finally come back again to the Asiatic continent, we find here too, although nearly the whole of its area is now occupied by one or the other of the eight book-religions, by Mosaism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism, by Brahmanism, Buddhism and Zoroastrianism, and in China by the religions of Confucius and Lao-tse, that nevertheless partly below the surface, and in some places still on the surface, more primitive forms of worship have maintained themselves. I mean the Shamanism of the Mongolian race, and the beautiful half-Homeric mythology of the Finnish and Esthonian tribes.

And now that I have displayed this world-wide panorama before your eyes, you will share, I think, the feeling of dismay with which the student of the science of religion

looks around, and asks himself where to begin and how to proceed. That there are materials in abundance, capable of scientific treatment, no one would venture to deny. But how are they to be held together? How are we to discover what all these religions share in common? How they differ? How they rise and how they decline? What they are and what they mean?

Let us take the old saying, *Divide et impera*, and translate it somewhat freely by 'Classify and conquer,' and I believe we shall then lay hold of the old thread of Ariadne which has led the students of many a science through darker labyrinths even than the labyrinth of the religions of the world. All real science rests on classification, and only in case we cannot succeed in classifying the various dialects of faith shall we have to confess that a science of religion is really an impossibility. If the ground before us has once been properly surveyed and carefully parcelled out, each scholar may then cultivate his own glebe, without wasting his energies and without losing sight of the general purposes to which all special researches must be subservient.

How, then, is the vast domain of religion to be parcelled out? How are religions to be classified, or, we ought rather to ask first, how have they been classified before now? The simplest classification, and one which we find adopted in almost every country, is that into *true* and *false* religions. It is very much like the first classification of languages into one's own language and the languages of the rest of the world; as the Greeks would say, into the languages of the Greeks and the Barbarians; or, as the Jews would say, into the languages of the Jews and the Gentiles; or, as the Hindus would say, into the languages of the *Āryas* and *Mlekkhas*; or, as the Chinese would say, into the

languages of the Middle Empire and that of the Outer Barbarians. I need not say why that sort of classification is useless for scientific purposes.

There is another classification, apparently of a more scientific character, but if examined more closely, equally worthless to the student of religion. I mean the well-known division into *revealed* and *natural* religions.

I have first to say a few words on the meaning attached to natural religion. That word is constantly used in very different acceptations. It is applied by several writers to certain historical forms of religion, which are looked upon as not resting on the authority of revelation, in whatever sense that word may be hereafter interpreted. Thus Buddhism would be a natural religion in the eyes of the Brahmans, Brahmanism would be a natural religion in the eyes of the Mohammedans. With us, all religions except Christianity and, though in a lesser degree, Mosaism, would be classed as merely natural; and though natural does not imply false, yet it distinctly implies the absence of any sanction beyond the sense of truth, or the voice of conscience that is within us.

But Natural Religion is also used in a very different sense, particularly by the philosophers of the last century. When people began to subject the principal historical religions to a critical analysis, they found that after removing what was peculiar to each, there remained certain principles which they all shared in common. These were supposed to be the principles of Natural Religion. Again, when everything that seemed supernatural, miraculous, and irrational, had been removed from the pages of the New Testament, there still remained a kind of skeleton of religion, and this too was passed off under the name of Natural Religion. During the last century, philosophers who were opposing the spread of scepticism and infidelity,

thought that this kind of natural, or, as it was also called, rational religion, might serve as a breakwater against utter unbelief, but they soon found out that a mere philosophical system, however true, can never take the place of religious faith. When Diderot said that all revealed religions were the heresies of Natural Religion, he meant by Natural Religion a body of truths implanted in human nature, to be discovered by the eye of reason alone, and independent of any such historical or local influences as give to each religion its peculiar character and local aspect. The existence of a deity, the nature of his attributes, such as Omnipotence, Omniscience, Omnipresence, Eternity, Self-existence, Spirituality, the Goodness also of the Deity, and, connected with it, the admission of a distinction between Good and Evil, between Virtue and Vice, all this, and according to some writers, the Unity and Personality also of the Deity, were included in the domain of Natural Religion. The scientific treatment of this so-called Natural Religion received the name of Natural Theology, a title rendered famous in the beginning of our century by the much praised and much abused work of Paley. Natural Religion corresponds in the science of religion to what in the science of language used to be called *Grammaire générale*, a collection of fundamental rules which are supposed to be self-evident, without which no grammar would be possible, but which, strange to say, never exist in their purity and completeness in any language that is or ever has been spoken by human beings. It is the same with religion. There never has been any real religion, consisting exclusively of the pure and simple tenets of Natural Religion, though there have been certain philosophers who brought themselves to believe that their religion was entirely rational, was, in fact, pure and simple Deism.

If we speak, therefore, of a classification of all historical religions into revealed and natural, what is meant by natural is simply the negation of revealed, and if we tried to carry out the classification practically, we should find the same result as before. We should have on one side Christianity alone, or, according to some theologians, Christianity and Judaism; on the other, all the remaining religions of the world.

This classification, therefore, whatever may be its practical value, is perfectly useless for scientific purposes. A more extended study shows us very soon that the claim of revelation is set up by the founders, or if not by them, at all events by the later preachers and advocates of most religions; and would therefore be declined by all but ourselves as a distinguishing feature of Christianity and Judaism. We shall see, in fact, that the claims to a revealed authority are urged far more strongly and elaborately by the believers in the Veda, than by the apologetical theologians among the Jews and Christians. Even Buddha, originally the most thoroughly human and self-dependent among the founders of religion, is by a strange kind of inconsistency represented, in later controversial writings, as in possession of revealed truth.¹ He himself could not, like Numa or Zoroaster, or Mohammed,² claim communication with higher spirits; still less could he, like the poets of the Veda, speak of divine inspirations and god-given utterances: for according to him there was none among the spirits greater or wiser than himself, and the gods of the Veda had become his servants and worshippers. Buddha himself appeals only to what we should call the inner light.³ When he delivered for the first time the four funda-

mental doctrines of his system, he said, 'Mendicants, for the attainment of these previously unknown doctrines, the eye, the knowledge, the wisdom, the clear perception, the light were developed within me.' He was called Sarvañña or omniscient by his earliest pupils; but when in later times, it was seen that on several points Buddha had but spoken the language of his age, and had shared the errors current among his contemporaries with regard to the shape of the earth and the movement of the heavenly bodies, an important concession was made by Buddhist theologians. They limited the meaning of the word 'omniscient,' as applied to Buddha, to a knowledge of the principal doctrines of his system, and concerning these, but these only, they declared him to have been infallible. This may seem to be a modern kind of view, but whether modern or ancient, it certainly reflects great credit on the Buddhist theologians. In the *Milinda Prasna*, however, which is a canonical book, we see that the same idea was already rising in the mind of the great Nāgasena. Being asked by King Milinda whether Buddha is omniscient, he replies: 'Yes, Great King, the blessed Buddha is omniscient. But Buddha does not at all times exercise his omniscience. By meditation he knows all things; meditating he knows everything he desires to know.' In this reply a distinction is evidently intended between subjects that may be known by sense and reason, and subjects that can be known by meditation only. Within the domain of sense and reason, Nāgasena does not claim omniscience or infallibility for Buddha, but he claims for him both omniscience and infallibility in all that is to be perceived by meditation

¹ *History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, by Max Müller, p. 83.

² Sprenger, *Mohammed*, vol. ii. p. 426.

³ Gogerly, *The Evidences and Doctrines of Christian Religion*. Colombo, 1862. Part I.

only, or, as we should say, in matters of faith.

I shall have to explain to you hereafter the extraordinary contrivances by which the Brahmans endeavoured to eliminate every human element from the hymns of the Veda, and to establish, not only the revealed, but the pre-historic or even ante-mundane character of their scriptures. No apologetic writings have ever carried the theory of revelation to greater extremes.

In the present stage of our enquiries, all that I wish to point out is this,—that when the founders or defenders of nearly all the religions of the world appeal to some kind of revelation in support of the truth of their doctrines, it could answer no useful purpose were we to attempt any classification on such disputed ground. Whether the claim of a natural or preternatural revelation, put forward by different religions, is well founded or not, is not the question at present. It falls to the province of Theoretic Theology to explain the true meaning of revelation, for few words have been used so vaguely and in so many different senses. It falls to its province to explain, not only how the veil was withdrawn that intercepted for a time the rays of divine truth, but, what is a far more difficult problem, how there could ever have been a veil between truth and the seeker of truth, between the adoring heart and the object of the highest adoration, between the Father and his children.

In Comparative Theology our task is different: we have simply to deal with the facts such as we find them. If people regard their religion as revealed, it is to them a revealed religion, and has to be treated as such by an impartial historian. We cannot determine a question by adopting, without discussion, the claims of one party, and ignoring those of the other.

But this principle of classification

into revealed and natural religions appears still more faulty, when we look at it from another point of view. Even if we granted that all religions, except Christianity and Mosaism, derived their origin from those faculties of the mind only which, according to Paley, are sufficient by themselves for calling into life the fundamental tenets of what we explained before as natural religion, the classification of Christianity and Judaism on one side as *revealed*, and of the other religions as *natural*, would still be defective, for the simple reason that no religion, though founded on revelation, can ever be entirely separated from natural religion. The tenets of natural religion, though by themselves they never constituted a real historical religion, supply the only ground on which revealed religion can stand, the only soil where it can strike root, and from which it can receive nourishment and life. If we took away that soil, or if we supposed that it, too, had to be supplied by revelation, we should not only run counter to the letter and spirit of the Old and the New Testament, but we should degrade revealed religion by changing it into a mere formula, to be accepted by a recipient incapable of questioning, weighing, and appreciating its truth; we should indeed have the germ, but we should have thrown away the congenial soil in which alone that germ of true religion can live and grow.

Christianity, addressing itself not only to the Jews, but also to the Gentiles, not only to the ignorant, but also to the learned, not only to the believers, but in the first instance, to the unbeliever, presupposed in all of them the elements of natural religion, and with them the power of choosing between truth and untruth. Thus only could St. Paul say: 'Prove all things, hold fast that which is good.' (1 Thess. v. 21.)

The same is true with regard to the Old Testament. There, too, the belief in a Deity, and in some at least of its indefeasible attributes, is taken for granted, and the prophets who call the wayward Jews back to the worship of Jehovah, appeal to them as competent by the truth-testing power that is within them, to choose between Jehovah and the gods of the Gentiles, between truth and untruth. Remember only the important chapter in the earliest history of the Jews, when Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God.

'And Joshua said unto all the people: Thus saith the Lord God of Israel: Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods.'

And then, after reminding them of all that God has done for them, he concludes by saying:

'Now, therefore, fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt, and serve ye the Lord.'

'And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, *choose you* this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites in whose lands ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.'

In order to choose between different gods and different forms of faith, a man must possess the faculty of choosing, the instruments of testing truth and untruth, whether revealed or not: he must know that certain fundamental tenets cannot

be absent in any true religion, and that there are doctrines against which his rational or moral conscience revolts as incompatible with truth. In short, there must be the foundation of religion, there must be the solid rock before it is possible to erect an altar, a temple, or a church: and if we call that foundation natural religion, it is clear that no revealed religion can be thought of which does not rest more or less firmly on natural religion.

These difficulties have been felt distinctly by some of our most learned divines, who have attempted a classification of religions from their own point of view. New definitions of natural religion have therefore been proposed in order to avoid the overlapping of the two definitions of natural and revealed religion. Natural religion has, for instance, been explained as the religion of nature before revelation, such as may be supposed to have existed among the patriarchs, or to exist still among primitive people who have not yet been enlightened by Christianity or debased by idolatry.

According to this view we should have to distinguish not two, but three classes of religion: the primitive or natural, the debased or idolatrous, and the revealed. But, as pointed out before, the first, the so-called primitive or natural religion, exists in the minds of modern philosophers rather than of ancient poets and prophets. History never tells us of any race with whom the simple feeling of reverence for higher powers was not hidden under mythological disguises. Nor would it be possible even thus to separate the three classes of religion by sharp and definite lines of demarcation, because both the debased or idolatrous and the purified or revealed religions would of necessity include within themselves the ele-

¹ See Professor Jowett's *Essay on Natural Religion*, p. 458.

ments of natural religion. Nor do we diminish these difficulties in the classificatory stage of our science if, in the place of this simple natural religion, we admit with other theologians and philosophers, a universal primeval revelation. This universal primeval revelation is only another name for natural religion, and it rests on no authority but the speculations of philosophers. The same class of philosophers, considering that language was too wonderful an achievement for the human mind, insisted on the necessity of admitting a universal primeval language revealed directly by God to man, or rather to mute beings; while the more thoughtful and the more reverent among the Fathers of the Church and among the founders of modern philosophy pointed out that it was more consonant with the general working of an all-wise and all-powerful Creator, that he should have endowed human nature with germinant faculties of speech, instead of presenting mute beings with grammars and dictionaries ready-made. Is an infant less wonderful than a man? an acorn less wonderful than an oak tree? a cell, if you like, or a protoplasm, including potentially within itself all that it has to become hereafter, less wonderful than all the moving creatures that have life? The same applies to religion. A universal primeval religion revealed direct by God to man, or rather to a crowd of atheists, may, to our human wisdom, seem the best solution of all difficulties: but a higher wisdom speaks to us from out the realities of history, and teaches us, if we will but learn, that 'we have all to seek the Lord, if haply we may feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us.'

Of the hypothesis of a universal primeval revelation and all its self-created difficulties we shall have to speak again: for the present it

must suffice if we have shown that the problem of a scientific classification of religion is not brought nearer to its solution by the additional assumption of another purely hypothetical class of religion.

We have not finished yet. A very important, and, for certain purposes, very useful classification has been that into polytheistic, dualistic, and monotheistic religions. If religion rests chiefly on a belief in a Higher Power, then the nature of that Higher Power would seem to supply a very characteristic feature by which to classify the religions of the world. Nor do I deny that for certain purposes such a classification has proved useful: all I maintain is that we should thus have to class together religions most heterogeneous in other respects, though agreeing in the number of their deities. Besides, it would certainly be necessary to add two other classes—the *henotheistic* and the *atheistic*. Henotheistic religions differ from polytheistic because, although they recognise the existence of various deities, or names of deities, they represent each deity as independent of all the rest, as the only deity present in the mind of the worshipper at the time of his worship and prayer. This character is very prominent in the religion of the Vedic poets. Although many gods are invoked in different hymns, sometimes also in the same hymn, yet there is no rule of precedence established among them; and, according to the varying aspects of nature, and the varying cravings of the human heart, it is sometimes Indra, the god of the blue sky, sometimes Agni, the god of fire, sometimes Varuna, the ancient god of the firmament, who are praised as supreme without any suspicion of rivalry, or any idea of subordination. This peculiar phase of religion, this worship of single gods, forms probably everywhere the first

stage in the growth of polytheism, and deserves therefore a separate name.

As to atheistic religions, they might seem to be perfectly impossible; and yet the fact cannot be disputed away that the religion of Buddha was from the beginning purely atheistic. The idea of the Godhead, after it had been degraded by endless mythological absurdities which struck and repelled the heart of Buddha, was, for a time at least, entirely expelled from the sanctuary of the human mind: and the highest morality that was ever taught before the rise of Christianity was taught by men with whom the gods had

become mere phantoms, and who had no altars, not even an altar to the Unknown God.

It will be the object of my next lecture to show that the only scientific and truly genetic classification of religions is the same as the classification of languages, and that, particularly in the early history of the human intellect, there exists the most intimate relationship between language, religion, and nationality—a relationship quite independent of those physical elements, the blood, the skull, or the hair, on which ethnologists have attempted to found their classification of the human race.

THIRD LECTURE,

Delivered at the Royal Institution, March 5, 1870.

IF we approached the religions of mankind without any prejudices or predilections, in that frame of mind in which the lover of truth or the man of science ought to approach every subject, I believe we should not be long before recognising the natural lines of demarcation which divide the whole religious world into several great continents. I am speaking, of course, of ancient religions only, or of the earliest period in the history of religious thought. In that primitive period which might be called, if not prehistoric, at least purely ethnic, because what we know of it consists only in the general movements of nations, and not in the acts of individuals, of parties, or of states—in that primitive period, I say, nations have been called languages; and in our best works on the ancient history of mankind, a map of languages has actually taken the place of a map of nations. But during the same primitive period nations might with equal right be called religions; for there is at that time the same, nay, an even more intimate, relationship between religion and nationality as between language and nationality. In order clearly to explain my meaning, I shall have to refer, as shortly as possible, to the speculations of some German philosophers on the true relation between language, religion, and nationality—speculations which have as yet received less attention on the part of modern ethnologists than they seem to me to deserve.

It was Schelling, one of the profoundest thinkers of Germany, who first asked the question, What makes an *ethnos*? What is the true

origin of a people? How did human beings become a people? And the answer which he gave, though it sounded startling to me when, in 1845, I listened, at Berlin, to the lectures of the old philosopher, has been confirmed more and more by subsequent researches into the history of language and religion.

To say that man is a gregarious animal, and that, like swarms of bees, or herds of wild elephants, men keep together instinctively and thus form themselves into a people, is saying very little. It might explain the agglomeration of one large flock of human beings, but it would never explain the formation of individual peoples.

Nor should we advance much towards a solution of our problem if we were told that men are broken up into peoples as bees are broken up into swarms, by following different queens, by owing allegiance to different governments. Allegiance to the same government, particularly in ancient times, is the result rather than the cause of nationality; while in historical times, such has been the confusion produced by extraneous influences, by brute force, or dynastic combinations, that the natural development of peoples has been entirely arrested, and we frequently find one and the same people divided by different governments, and different peoples united under the same ruler.

Our question, What makes a people? has to be considered in reference to the most ancient times. How did men form themselves into a people before there were kings or shepherds of men? Was it through community of blood? I doubt it. Community of blood produces fami-

lies, clans, possibly races, but it does not produce that higher and purely moral feeling which binds men together and makes them a people.

It is language and religion that make a people, but religion is even a more powerful agent than language. The languages of many of the aboriginal inhabitants of Northern America are but dialectic varieties of one type, but those who spoke these dialects have never coalesced into a people. They remained mere clans or wandering tribes; they never knew the feeling of a nation because they never knew the feeling of worshipping the same gods. The Greeks, on the contrary, though speaking their strongly marked, and I doubt whether mutually intelligible dialects, the Æolic, the Doric, the Ionic, felt themselves at all times, even when ruled by different tyrants, or broken up into numerous republics, as one great Hellenic people. What was it, then, that preserved in their hearts, in spite of dialects, in spite of dynasties, in spite even of the feuds of tribes and the jealousies of states, the deep feeling of that ideal unity which constitutes a people? It was their primitive religion; it was a dim recollection of the common allegiance they owed from time immemorial to the great father of gods and men; it was their belief in the old Zeus of Dodona, in the Panhellenic Zeus.

Perhaps the most signal confirmation of this view that it is religion even more than language which supplies the foundation of nationality, is to be found in the history of the Jews, the chosen people of God. The language of the Jews differed from that of the Phenicians, the Moabites, and other neighbouring tribes much

less than the Greek dialects differed from each other. But the worship of Jehovah made the Jews a peculiar people, the people of Jehovah, separated by their God, though not by their language, from the people of Chemosh (the Moabites)¹ and from the worshippers of Baal and Ashtoreth. It was their faith in Jehovah that changed the wandering tribes of Israel into a nation.

'A people,' as Schelling says, 'exists only when it has determined itself with regard to its mythology. This mythology, therefore, cannot take its origin after a national separation has taken place, after a people has become a people: nor could it spring up while a people was still contained as an invisible part in the whole of humanity; but its origin must be referred to that very period of transition before a people has assumed its definite existence, and when it is on the point of separating and constituting itself. The same applies to the language of a people; it becomes definite at the same time that a people becomes definite.'²

Hegel, the great rival of Schelling, arrived at the same conclusion. In his *Philosophy of History* he says: 'The idea of God constitutes the general foundation of a people. Whatever is the form of a religion, the same is the form of a state and its constitution: it springs from religion, so much so that the Athenian and the Roman states were possible only with the peculiar heathendom of those peoples, and that even now a Roman Catholic state has a different genius and a different constitution from a Protestant state. The genius of a people is a definite, individual genius which becomes conscious of its individuality in different spheres: in the character of

¹ Numb. xxi. 29; Jeremiah xlviii. 7: 'And Chemosh shall go forth into captivity, with his priests and his princes together.'

² *Vorlesungen über Philosophie der Mythologie*, vol. i. p. 107 seq.

its moral life, its political constitution, its art, religion and science.'¹

But this is not an idea of philosophers only. Historians, and, more particularly, the students of the history of law, have arrived at very much the same conclusion. Though to many of them law seems naturally to be the foundation of society, and the bond that binds a nation together, those who look below the surface have quickly perceived that law itself, at least ancient law, derives its authority, its force, its very life from religion. Mr. Maine is no doubt right when, in the case of the so-called Laws of Manu, he rejects the idea of the Deity dictating an entire code or body of law, as an idea of a decidedly modern origin. Yet the belief that the law-giver enjoyed some closer intimacy with the Deity than ordinary mortals pervades the ancient traditions of many nations. According to a well-known passage in Diodorus Siculus (l. i. c. 94), the Egyptians believed their laws to have been communicated to Mnevis by Hermes; the Cretans held that Minos received his laws from Zeus, the Lacedaemonians that Lykurgos received his laws from Apollon. According to the Arians, their law-giver, Zathraustes, had received his laws from the Good Spirit; according to the Getae, Zamolxis received his laws from the goddess Hestia; and, according to the Jews, Moses received his laws from the god Iao.' No one has pointed out more forcibly than Mr. Maine that in ancient times religion as a divine influence was underlying and supporting every relation of life and every social institution. 'A supernatural

presidency,' he writes, 'is supposed to consecrate and keep together all the cardinal institutions of those early times, the state, the race, and the family' (p. 6). 'The elementary group is the family; the aggregation of families forms the *gens* or the house. The aggregation of houses makes the tribe. The aggregation of tribes constitutes the commonwealth' (p. 128). Now the family is held together by the family *sacra* (p. 191), and so were the *gens*, the tribe, and the commonwealth; and strangers could only be admitted to these brotherhoods by being admitted to their *sacra* (p. 131). At a later time, law breaks away from religion (p. 193), but even then many traces remain to show that the hearth was the first altar, the father the first elder, his wife and children and slaves the first congregation gathered together round the sacred fire—the Hestia, the goddess of the house and in the end the goddess of the people. To the present day, marriage, the most important of civil acts, the very foundation of civilised life, has retained the religious character which it had from the very beginning of history.

Let us see now what religion really is in those early ages of which we are here speaking: I do not mean religion as a silent power, working in the heart of man; I mean religion in its outward appearance, religion as something outspoken, tangible, and definite, that can be described and communicated to others. We shall find that in that sense religion lies within a very small compass. A few words, recognised as names of the deity; a few epi-

¹ Though these words of Hegel's were published long before Schelling's lectures, they seem to me to breathe the spirit of Schelling rather than of Hegel, and it is but fair therefore to state that Schelling's lectures, though not published, were printed and circulated among friends twenty years before they were delivered at Berlin. The question of priority may seem of little importance on matters such as these, but there is nevertheless much truth in Schelling's remark, that philosophy advances not so much by the answers given to difficult problems, as by the starting of new problems, and by asking questions which no one else would think of asking.

thets that have been raised from their material meaning to a higher and more spiritual stage, I mean words which expressed originally bodily strength, or brightness, or purity, and which came gradually so mean greatness, goodness, and holiness; lastly, some more or less technical terms expressive of such ideas as *sacrifice*, *altar*, *prayer*, possibly *virtue* and *sin*, *body* and *spirit*—this is what constitutes the outward framework of the incipient religions of antiquity. If we look at this simple manifestation of religion, we see at once why religion, during those early ages of which we are here speaking, may really and truly be called a sacred dialect of human speech; how at all events early religion and early language are most intimately connected, religion depending entirely for its outward expression on the more or less adequate resources of language.

If this dependence of early religion on language is once clearly understood, it follows, as a matter of course, that whatever classification has been found most useful in the science of language ought to prove equally useful in the science of religion. If there is a truly genetic relationship of languages, the same relationship ought to hold together the religions of the world, at least the most ancient religions.

Before we proceed therefore to consider the proper classification of religions, it will be necessary to say a few words on the present state of our knowledge with regard to the genetic relationship of languages.

If we confine ourselves to the Asiatic continent with its important peninsula of Europe, we find that in the vast desert of drifting human speech three and only three oases have been formed in which, before the beginning of all history, language became permanent and traditional, assumed in fact a new

character, a character totally different from the original character of the floating and constantly varying speech of human beings. These three oases of language are known by the name of *Turanian*, *Aryan*, and *Semitic*. In these three centres, more particularly in the *Aryan* and *Semitic*, language ceased to be natural; its growth was arrested, and it became permanent, solid, petrified, or, if you like, historical speech. I have always maintained that this centralisation and traditional conservation of language could only have been the result of religious and political influences, and I now mean to show that we really have clear evidence of three independent settlements of religion, the *Turanian*, the *Aryan*, and the *Semitic*, concomitantly with the three great settlements of language.

Taking Chinese for what it can hardly any longer be doubted that it is, viz. the earliest representative of Turanian speech, we find in China an ancient colourless and unpoetical religion, a religion we might almost venture to call monosyllabic, consisting of the worship of a host of single spirits, representing the sky, the sun, storms and lightning, mountains and rivers, one standing by the side of the other without any mutual attraction, without any higher principle to hold them together. In addition to this, we likewise meet in China with the worship of ancestral spirits, the spirits of the departed, who are supposed to retain some cognisance of human affairs, and to possess peculiar powers which they exercise for good or for evil. This double worship of human and of natural spirits constitutes the old popular religion of China, and it has lived on to the present day, at least in the lower ranks of society, though there towers above it a more elevated range of half religious and half philosophical faith, a belief in two higher Powers

which, in the language of philosophy, may mean *Form* and *Matter*, in the language of Ethics, *Good* and *Evil*, but which in the original language of religion and mythology are represented as *Heaven* and *Earth*.

It is true that we know the ancient popular religion of China from the works of Confucius only, or from even more modern sources. But Confucius, though he is called the founder of a new religion, was really but the new preacher of an old religion. He was emphatically a transmitter, not a maker.¹ He says himself, 'I only hand on; I cannot create new things. I believe in the ancients, and therefore I love them.'²

We find, secondly, the ancient worship of the Semitic races, clearly marked by a number of names of the Deity, which appear in the polytheistic religions of the Babylonians, the Phenicians, and Carthaginians, as well as in the monotheistic creeds of Jews, Christians, and Mohammedans. It is almost impossible to characterise the religion of people so different from each other in language, in literature, and general civilisation, so different also from themselves at different periods of their history; but if I ventured to characterise the worship of all the Semitic nations by one word, I should say it was pre-eminently a worship of *God in History*, of God as affecting the destinies of individuals and races and nations rather than of God as wielding the powers of nature. The names of the Semitic deities are mostly words expressive of moral qualities; they mean the Strong, the Exalted, the Lord, the King; and they grow but seldom into divine personalities, definite in their outward appearance or easily to be recognised by strongly marked features of a real

dramatic character. Hence many of the ancient Semitic gods have a tendency to flow together, and a transition from the worship of single gods to the worship of one God required no great effort. In the monotonous desert, more particularly, the worship of single gods glided away almost imperceptibly into the worship of one God. If I were to add, as a distinguishing mark, that the Semitic religions excluded the feminine gender in their names of the Deity, or that all their female deities were only representatives of the active energies of older and sexless gods, this would be true of some only, not of all; and it would require nearly as many limitations as the statement of M. Renan, that the Semitic religions were instinctively monotheistic.

We find lastly the ancient worship of the Aryan race, carried to all the corners of the earth by its adventurous sons, and easily recognised, whether in the valleys of India or in the forests of Germany, by the common names of the Deity, all originally expressive of natural powers. Their worship is not, as has been so often said, a worship of nature. But if it had to be characterised by one word, I should venture to call it a worship of *God in Nature*, of God as appearing behind the gorgeous veil of Nature, rather than as hidden behind the veil of the sanctuary of the human heart. The gods of the Aryan pantheon assume an individuality so strongly marked and permanent, that with the Aryans, a transition to monotheism required a powerful struggle, and seldom took effect without iconoclastic revolutions or philosophical despair.

These three classes of religion are not to be mistaken, as little as the three classes of language, the Tura-

¹ Dr. Legge, *Life of Confucius*, p. 96.

² Lün-yü (§ 1. a.); Schott, *Chinesische Literatur*, p. 7.

nian, the Semitic, and the Aryan. They mark three events in the most ancient history of the world, events which have determined the whole fate of the human race, and of which we ourselves still feel the consequences in our language, in our thoughts, and in our religion.

But the chaos which these three heroes in language, thought, and religion, the Turanian, the Semitic, and the Aryan, left behind, was not altogether a chaos. The stream of language from which these three channels had separated, rolled on; the sacred fire of religion from which these three altars had been lighted was not extinguished, though hidden in smoke and ashes. There was language and there was religion everywhere in the world, but it was natural, wild-growing language and religion; it had no history, it left no history, and it is therefore incapable of that peculiar scientific treatment which has been found applicable to a study of the languages and the religions of the Chinese, the Semitic, and the Aryan nations.

People wonder why the students of language have not succeeded in establishing more than three families of speech—or rather two, for the Turanian can hardly be called a family, in the strict sense of that word, until it has been fully proved that Chinese forms the centre of the two Turanian branches, the North Turanian on one side, and the South Turanian on the other; that Chinese¹ forms, in fact, the earliest settlement of that unsettled mass of speech, which, at a later stage, became more fixed and traditional; in the north, in *Tungusic*, *Mongolic*, *Tataric*, and *Finnic*, and in the south, in *Taic*, *Malaic*, *Bhotiya*, and *Tamulic*. Now the reason why scholars have discovered no more than these two or three great families of speech is very

simple. There were no more, and we cannot make more. Families of languages are very peculiar formations; they are, and they must be, the exception, not the rule, in the growth of language. There was always the possibility, but there never was, as far as I can judge, any necessity of human speech leaving its primitive stage of wild growth and wild decay. If it had not been for what I consider a purely spontaneous act on the part of the ancestors of the Semitic, Aryan, and Turanian races, all languages might for ever have remained ephemeral, answering the purposes of every generation that comes and goes, struggling on, now gaining, now losing, sometimes acquiring a certain permanence, but after a season breaking up again, and carried away like blocks of ice by the waters that rise underneath the surface. Our very idea of language would then have been something totally different from what it is now. For what are we doing? We first form our idea of what language ought to be from those exceptional languages which were arrested in their natural growth by social, religious, political, or at all events by extraneous influences, and we then turn round and wonder why all languages are not like these two or three exceptional channels of speech. We might as well wonder why all animals are not domesticated, or why, besides the garden anemone, there should be endless varieties of the same flower growing wild on the meadow and in the woods.

In the Turanian class, in which the original concentration was never so powerful as in the Aryan and Semitic families, we can still catch a glimpse of the natural growth of language, though confined within certain limits. The different settlements of this great floating mass of homogeneous

speech do not show such definite marks of relationship as Hebrew and Arabic, Greek and Sanskrit, but only such sporadic coincidences and general structural similarities as can be explained by the admission of a primitive concentration, followed by a new period of independent growth. It would be wilful blindness not to recognise the definite and characteristic features which pervade the North Turanian languages: it would be impossible to explain the coincidences between Hungarian, Lapponian, Esthonian, and Finnish, except on the supposition that there was a very early concentration of speech whence these dialects branched off. We see less clearly in the South Turanian group, though I confess my surprise even here has always been, not that there should be so few, but that there should be even these few relics, attesting the former community of these divergent streams of language. The point in which the South Turanian and North Turanian languages meet goes back as far as Chinese; for that Chinese is at the root of Mandshu and Mongolian as well as of Siamese and Tibetan becomes daily more apparent through the researches of Mr. Edkins. There is no hurry for pronouncing definitely on these questions: only we must not allow the progress of free enquiry to be barred by dogmatic scepticism; we must not look for evidence which from the nature of the case we cannot and ought not to find; and, before all things, we must not allow ourselves to be persuaded that for the discovery of truth blinkers are more useful than spectacles.

If we turn away from the Asiatic continent, the original home of the Aryan, the Semitic, and the Turanian languages, we find that in Africa, too, a comparative study of

dialects has clearly proved a concentration of African language, the results of which may be seen in the uniform *Bantu* dialects, spoken from the equator to the Keiskamma.¹ North of this body of Bantu or Kafir speech, we have an independent settlement of Semitic language in the Berber and the Galla dialects; south of it we have only the Hottentot and Bushman tongues, the latter hardly analysed as yet, the former supposed to be related to languages spoken in Northern Africa from which it became separated by the intrusion of the Kafir tribes. Some scholars have indeed imagined a relationship between the language of the Hottentots, the Nubian dialects, and the ancient Egyptian, a language which, whatever its real relationship may be, marks at all events another primeval settlement of speech and religion, outside the Asiatic continent. But while the spoken languages of the African continent enable us to see the general articulation of the primitive population of Africa—for there is a continuity in language which nothing can destroy—we know, and can know, but little of the growth and decay of African religion. In many places Mohammedanism and Christianity have swept away every recollection of the ancient gods; and even when attempts have been made by missionaries or travellers to describe the religious status of Zulus or Hottentots, they could only see the most recent forms of African faith, and those were changed almost invariably into grotesque caricatures. Of ancient African religion we have but one record, viz. in the monuments of Egypt; but here, in spite of the abundance of materials, in spite of the ruins of temples, and numberless statues and half-deciphered papyri, I must confess that we have not yet come very near to the beatings of the

¹ Bleek, *Comparative Grammar of the South African Languages*, p. 2.

heart which once gave life to all this strange and mysterious grandeur.¹

What applies to Africa applies to America. In the North we have the languages as witnesses of ancient migrations, but of ancient religion we have, again, hardly anything. In the South we know of two linguistic and political centres; and there, in Mexico and Peru, we meet with curious, though not always trustworthy, traditions of an ancient and well-established system of religious faith and worship.

The Science of Religion has this advantage over the Science of Language, if advantage it may be called, that in several cases where the latter has materials sufficient to raise problems of the highest importance, but not sufficient for their satisfactory solution, the former has no materials at all. The ancient temples are destroyed, the names of the ancient deities are clean forgotten in many parts of the world where dialects, however changed, still keep up the tradition of the most distant ages. But even if it were otherwise, the students of religion would, I think, do well to follow the example of the students of language, and to serve their first apprenticeship in a comparative study of the Aryan and Semitic religions. If it can only be proved that the religions of the Aryan nations are united by the same bonds of a real relationship which have enabled us to treat their languages as so many varieties of the same type; and so also of the Semitic; the field thus opened is vast enough, and its careful clearing and cultivation will occupy several generations of scholars. And this original relationship, I believe, can be proved. Names of the principal deities, words also expressive of the most essential elements of religion, such

as *prayer, sacrifice, altar, spirit, law, and faith*, have been preserved among the Aryan and among the Semitic nations, and these relics admit of one explanation only. After that, a comparative study of the Turanian religions may be approached with better hope of success; for that there was not only a primitive Aryan and a primitive Semitic religion, but likewise a primitive Turanian religion, before each of these primeval races was broken up and became separated in language, worship, and national sentiment, admits, I believe, of little doubt.

Let us begin with our own ancestors, the Aryans. In a lecture which I delivered in this place some years ago, I drew a sketch of what the life of the Aryans must have been before their first separation, that is, before the time when Sanskrit was spoken in India, or Greek in Asia Minor and Europe. The outline of that sketch and the colours with which it was filled were simply taken from language. We argued that it would be possible, if we took all the words which exist in the same form in French, Italian, and Spanish, to show what words, and therefore what things, must have been known to the people who did not as yet speak French, Italian, and Spanish, but who spoke that language which preceded these Romance dialects. We happen to know that language: it was Latin; but if we did not know a word of Latin or a single chapter of Roman history, we should still be able, by using the evidence of the words which are common to all the Romance languages, to draw some kind of picture of what the principal thoughts and occupations of those people must have been who lived in Italy a thousand years at least before the time of Charlemagne. We could easily prove that those

¹ De Vogüé, *Journal Asiatique*, 186-, p. 136. De Rougé, 'Sur la Religion des anciens Égyptiens,' in *Annales de Philosophie chrétienne*, Nov. 1869.

people must have had *kings* and *laws*, *temples* and *palaces*, *ships* and *carriages*, *high roads* and *bridges*, and nearly all the ingredients of a highly civilised life. We could prove this, as I said, by simply taking the names of all these things as they occur in French, Spanish, and Italian, and by showing that as Spanish did not borrow them from French, or Italian from Spanish, they must have existed in that previous stratum of language from which these three modern Romance dialects took their origin.

Exactly the same kind of argument enabled us to put together a kind of mosaic picture of the earliest civilisation of the Aryan people before the time of their separation. As we find in Greek, Latin, and Sanskrit, also in Slavonic, Celtic, and Teutonic, the same word for 'house,' we are fully justified in concluding that before any of these languages had assumed a separate existence, a thousand years at least before Agamemnon and before Manu, the ancestors of the Aryan race were no longer dwellers in tents, but builders of permanent houses.¹ As we find the name for town the same in Sanskrit and Greek,² we can conclude with equal certainty that towns were known to the Aryans before Greek and before Sanskrit was spoken. As we find the name for king the same in Sanskrit, Latin, Teutonic, and Celtic,³ we know again that kingly government was established and recognised by the Aryans at the same prehistoric period. I must not allow myself to be tempted to draw the whole of that picture of primeval civilisation over again.⁴ I only wish to call back to your recollection the fact that in exploring together the ancient archives of language,

we found that the highest god had received the same name in the ancient mythology of India, Greece, Italy, and Germany, and had retained that name whether worshipped on the Himalayan mountains, or among the oaks of Dodona, on the Capitol, or in the forests of Germany. I pointed out that his name was *Dyaus* in Sanskrit, *Zeus* in Greek, *Jovis* in Latin, *Tiu* in German; but I hardly dwelt with sufficient strength on the startling nature of this discovery. These names are not mere names: they are historical facts, ay, facts more immediate, more trustworthy, than many facts of mediæval history. These words are not mere words, but they bring before us, with all the vividness of an event which we witnessed ourselves but yesterday, the ancestors of the whole Aryan race, thousands of years it may be before Homer and the Veda, worshipping an unseen Being, under the selfsame name, the best, the most exalted name, they could find in their vocabulary—under the name of Light and Sky. And let us not turn away, and say that this was after all but nature-worship and idolatry. No, it was not meant for that, though it may have been degraded into that in later times; *Dyaus* did not mean the blue sky, nor was it simply the sky personified: it was meant for something else. We have in the Veda the invocation *Dyaūs pitar*, the Greek *Zeū páter*, the Latin *Jupiter*; and that means in all the three languages what it meant before these three languages were torn asunder—it means Heaven-Father! These two words are not mere words; they are to my mind the oldest poem, the oldest prayer of mankind, or at

¹ Sk. *dama*, *δῶμος*, *domus*, Goth. *timrjan*, 'to build,' Sl. *dom*.

Sk. *ve-a*, *οἶκος*, *vicus*, Goth. *veih-s*.

² Sk. *pur*, *puri*, or *puri*; Gr. *πόλις*; Sk. *vāstu*, 'house'; Gr. *ἔστυ*.

³ Sk. *Rāj*, *rājan*, *rex*; Goth. *reiks*; Ir. *riogh*.

⁴ See *Chips from a German Workshop*, vol. ii. p. 22 seq.

least of that pure branch of it to which we belong—and I am as firmly convinced that this prayer was uttered, that this name was given to the unknown God before Sanskrit was Sanskrit and Greek was Greek, as, when I see the Lord's Prayer in the languages of Polynesia and Melanesia, I feel certain that it was first uttered in the language of Jerusalem. We little thought when we heard for the first time the name of Jupiter, degraded it may be by Homer or Ovid into a scolding husband or a faithless lover, what sacred records lay enshrined in this unholy name. We shall have to learn the same lesson again and again in the Science of Religion, viz. that the place whereon we stand is holy ground. Thousands of years have passed since the Aryan nations separated to travel to the North and the South, the West and the East: they have each formed their languages, they have each founded empires and philosophies, they have each built temples and razed them to the ground; they have all grown older, and it may be wiser and better; but when they search for a name for what is most exalted and yet most dear to every one of us, when they wish to express both awe and love, the infinite and the finite, they can but do what their old fathers did when gazing up to the eternal sky, and feeling the presence of a Being as far as far and as near as near can be: they can but combine the selfsame words, and utter once more the primeval Aryan prayer, Heaven-Father, in that form which will endure forever, 'Our Father which art in heaven.'

Let us now turn to the early religion of the Semitic nations. The Semitic languages, it is well known, are even more closely connected together than the Aryan languages, so much so that a comparative grammar of the Semitic languages

seems to have but few of the attractions possessed by a comparative study of Sanskrit, Greek, and Latin. Semitic scholars complain that there is no work worth doing in comparing the grammars of Hebrew, Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic, for they have only to be placed side by side¹ in order to show their close relationship. I do not think this is quite the case, and I still hope that M. Renan will carry out his original design, and, by including not only the literary branches of the Semitic family, but also the ancient dialects of Phenicia, Arabia, Babylon, and Nineveh, produce a comparative grammar of the Semitic languages that may hold its place by the side of Bopp's great work on the 'Comparative Grammar of the Aryan Languages.'

But what is still more surprising to me is that no Semitic scholar should have followed the example of the Aryan scholars, and collected from the different Semitic dialects those common words which must have existed before Hebrew was Hebrew, before Syriac was Syriac, and before Arabic was Arabic, and from which some kind of idea might be formed as to what were the principal thoughts and occupations of the Semitic race in its earliest undivided state. The materials seem much larger and much more easily accessible.² The principal degrees of relationship, for instance, have common names among the Semitic as among the Aryan nations, and if it was important to show that the Aryans had named and recognised not only the natural members of a family, such as father and mother, son and daughter, brother and sister, but also the more distant members, the father and mother in law, the son and daughter in law, the brother and sister in law, would it not be of equal interest to show that the Semitic nations had reached the

¹ See Bunsen's *Christianity and Mankind*, vol. iii. p. 246 seq.

² Ibid. iii. 246, iv. 345.

same degree of civilisation long before the time of the laws of Moses?

Confining ourselves to the more immediate object of our researches, we see without difficulty that the Semitic languages, like the Aryan languages, possess a number of names of the Deity in common, which must have existed before the *Southern* or *Arabic*, the *Northern* or *Aramaic*, the *Middle* or *Hebraic* branches became permanently separated, and which, therefore, allow us an insight into the religious conceptions of the once united Semitic race long before Jehovah was worshipped by Abraham, or Baal was invoked in Phenicia, or El in Babylon.

It is true, as I pointed out before, that the meaning of many of these names is more general than the original meaning of the names of the Aryan gods. Many of them signify *Powerful*, *Venerable*, *Exalted*, *King*, *Lord*, and they might seem, therefore, like honorific titles, to have been given independently by the different branches of the Semitic family to the gods whom they worshipped each in their own sanctuaries. But if we consider how many words there were in the Semitic languages to express greatness, strength, or lordship, the fact that the same appellatives occur as the proper names of the deity in Syria, in Carthage, in Babylon, and in Palestine, admits of one historical explanation only. There must have been a time for the Semitic as well as for the Aryan races, when they fixed the names of their deities, and that time must have preceded the formation of their separate languages and separate religions.

One of the oldest names of the deity among the ancestors of the

Semitic nations was *El*. It meant Strong. It occurs in the Babylonian inscriptions as *Ilu*, God,¹ and in the very name of *Bab-il*, the gate or temple of *Il*. In Hebrew it occurs both in its general sense of strong or hero, and as a name of God; and we find it applied, not to the true God only, but also to the gods of the gentiles or to false gods. We have it in *Beth-el*, the house of God, and in many other names. If used with the article as *ha-El*, the Strong One, or the God, it always is meant in the Old Testament for Jehovah, the true God.

The same *El* was worshipped at Byblus by the Phenicians, and he was called there the son of Heaven and Earth.² His father was the son of *Eliun*, the most high God, who had been killed by wild animals. The son of *Eliun*, who succeeded him, was dethroned, and at last slain by his own son *El*, whom Philo identifies with the Greek *Kronos*, and represents as the presiding deity of the planet Saturn.³ In the Himyaritic inscriptions, too, the name of *El* has been discovered.⁴

With the name of *El*, Philo connected the name of *Elohim*, the plural of *Eloah*. In the battle between *El* and his father, the allies of *El*, he says, were called *Eloim*, as those who were with *Kronos* were called *Kronioi*.⁵ This is, no doubt, a very tempting etymology of *Eloah*; but as the best Semitic scholars, and particularly Professor Fleischer, have declared against it, we shall have, however reluctantly, to surrender it. *Eloah* is the same word as the Arabic *ilāh*, God.

In the singular, *Eloah* is used in the Bible synonymously with *El*; in the plural it may mean gods in general,

¹ Schrader, in *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, vol. xxiii. p. 350.

² Bunsen, *Egypt*, iv. 187. *Fragmenta Hist. Græc.*, vol. iii. p. 567.

³ *Fragmenta Hist. Græc.*, iii. pp. 567-571. That *El* is the presiding deity of the planet Saturn according to the Chaldaeans is also confirmed by Diodorus Siculus, ii. 30-3.

⁴ Osiander, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, x. 61.

⁵ *Frag. Hist. Græc.*, iii. 568, 18. οἱ δὲ σύμμαχοι Ἡλίου τοῦ Κρόνου Ἐλοεῖμ ἐπεκλήθη ὡς ἂν Κρόνιοι οὗτοι ᾗσαν οἱ λεγόμενοι ἐπὶ Κρόνου.

or false gods, but it becomes in the Old Testament the recognised name of the true God, plural in form, but singular in meaning. In Arabic, *ilāh*, without the article, means a God in general: with the article, *Al-Ilāh*, or *Allāh*,¹ becomes the name of the God of Mohammed, as it was the name of the God of Abraham and of Moses.

The origin of *Eloah* or *Ilāh* has been frequently discussed by European as well as by native scholars. The Kamús says that there were twenty, Mohammad El Fási that there were thirty, opinions about it. Professor Fleischer,² whose judgment in such matters we may trust implicitly, traces *El*, the strong one, back to a root *āl* (with middle vav, aval), to be thick and dense, to be fleshy and strong. But he takes *Eloah* or *Ilāh* for an abstract noun, in the sense of fear, derived from a totally different root, viz. *alah*, to be agitated, confounded, perplexed. From meaning fear, *Eloah* came to mean the object of fear or reverence, and thus became a name of God. In the same way we find *pachad*, which means fear, used in the sense of God; Gen. xxi. 42—'Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac had been with me.' And again, v. 53—'And Jacob sware by the fear of his father Isaac.' In Aramaic, *dachlā*, fear, is the recognised name for God or for an idol.

The same ancient name appears also in its feminine form as *Allāt*.³ Her famous temple at Tâif, in Arabia, was second only in importance to the sanctuary of Mekkah, and was destroyed at the command of Mohammed. The worship of *Allāt*, however, was not confined to this one place; and there can be no doubt that the Arabian goddess *Alilat*, mentioned by Herodotus,⁴ is the same as the *Allāt* of the Korân.

Another famous name of the deity, traces of which can be found among most of the Semitic nations, is *Baal*, or *Bel*. The Assyrians and Babylonians,⁵ the Phenicians⁶ and Carthaginians, the Moabites and Philistines, and, we must add, the Jews also, all knew of *Bel* or *Baal* as a great, or even as the supreme God. Baal can hardly be considered as a strange and foreign god in the eyes of the Jewish people, who, in spite of the protests of the Hebrew prophets, worshipped him so constantly in the groves of Jerusalem. He was felt by them almost as a home deity, or, at all events, as a Semitic deity, and among the gods whom the fathers served on the other side of the flood, Bel held most likely a very prominent place. Though originally one,⁷ Baal became divided into many divine personalities through the influence of local worship. We hear of a Baal-tsur, Baal-tsidon, Baaltars, originally the Baal of Tyre, of Sidon, and Tarsus. On two can-

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اللة، الللة، الللة، الللة

² See a note by Professor Fleischer in Delitzsch, *Commentar über die Genesis*, 3rd ed., 1860, p. 64; also *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, vol. x. p. 60; and *Sitzungsberichte der königl. Sächsischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften, Philosoph. Hist. Classe*, vol. xviii. (1866), p. 290-292. Dr. W. Wright adopts Prof. Fleischer's derivation; likewise Prof. Kuenen in his work, *De Godsdienst van Israel*, p. 45.

³ Osiander, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, vii. p. 479-482.

الللة، *Allāt*, goddess, is contracted from الللة، *Al-Ilāhat*.

⁴ Herod. iii. 8. 'Ονομάζουσι (οἱ Ἀράβιοι) τὸν μὲν Διόνυσον Ὀροτάλ, τὴν δὲ Οὐρανίην Ἀλιλάτ. In Herod. i. 131, 138, this name is corrupted to Ἀλιττα. See Cs.ander, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, ii. 482-3.

⁵ *Fragmenta Hist. Græc.* ii. 498, 2.

⁶ *Ibid.* iii. 568, 21.

⁷ M. de Vogüé, *Journal Asiatique*, 1867, p. 135.

delabra found on the island of Malta we read the Phenician dedication to 'Melkarth, the Baal of Tyre.' At Shechem Baal was worshipped as *Baal-barith*,¹ supposed to mean the god of treaties; at Ekron the Philistines worshipped him as *Baal-zebul*,² the lord of flies, while the Moabites, and the Jews too, knew him also by the name of *Baal-peor*.³ On Phenician coins Baal is called Bâal Shâmayim, the Baal of heaven, which is the *Beelsamên* of Philo, identified by him with the sun.⁴ 'When the heat became oppressive, the ancient races of Phenicia,' he says, 'lifted their hand heavenward to the sun. For him they considered the only God, the lord of heaven, calling him Beelsamên,' which with the Phenicians is lord of heaven, and with the Greeks Zeus.' We likewise hear of *Baalim*, or many Baals or gods. And in the same way as by the side of the male *Ilâh* or *Allâh* we found a female *Allât*, we also find by the side of the male Baal, a female deity *Baalt*, the Baaltis of the Phenicians. It may be that the original conception of female deities differs among Semitic and Aryan nations, and that these feminine forms of *Allâh* and *Baal* were at first intended only to express the energy or activity, or the collective powers of the deity, not a separate being, least of all a wife. This opinion⁵ is certainly confirmed when we see that in a Carthaginian inscription the goddess *Tanit* is called the face of *Baal*,⁷ and that in the

inscription of Eshmunazar, the Sidonian Astarte is called the name of *Baal*.⁸ In course of time, however, this abstract idea was supplanted by that of a female power, and even a wife, and as such we find *Baaltis* worshipped by Phenicians,⁹ Babylonians, and Assyrians,¹⁰ for the name of Mylitta in Herodotus¹¹ is, according to Dr. Oppert, a mere corruption of Baaltis.

Another famous female goddess is *Ashtoreth*, a name which presupposes a masculine deity, *Ashtar*. Traces of this god have been discovered in the *Ishtar* of the Babylonian inscriptions, and more recently in the *Ashtar* of the Moabite stone. In this case, however, the female deity became predominant, and was worshipped, not only by Carthaginians, Phenicians, and Philistines, but likewise by the Jews¹² when they forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtaroth.¹³ The Syrians called her Astarte, and by that ominous name she became known to Greeks and Romans. When Jeremiah speaks of the Queen of Heaven,¹⁴ this can only be meant for Astarte, or Baaltis. Even in southern Arabia there are traces of the worship of this ancient goddess. For in Sanâ, the ancient capital of the Himyaritic kingdom, there was a magnificent palace and temple dedicated to Venus (*Bait Ghumdân*), and the name of *Athtar* has been read in the Himyaritic inscriptions: nay, it is preceded in one place by the verb in the masculine gender.¹⁵

¹ Judges viii. 33; ix. 4.

² 2 Kings i. 2. 3, 16.

³ Numbers xxv.

⁴ *Fragmenta Hist. Græc.* iii. 565, 5. It is impossible to change *ἥλιον* into *ἡλον*, because El or Kronos is mentioned afterwards.

⁵ Is this the same as Barsamus, mentioned by Moses of Chorene (*Hist. Arm.* i. 13) as a deified hero worshipped by the Syrians? Or is Barsamus the Son of Heaven? See Rawlinson, *Ancient Monarchies*, i. p. 116.

⁶ De Vogüé, l. c. p. 138.

⁷ פְּנֵי בַּעַל, cf. פְּנֵי יְהוָה.

⁸ שֵׁם יְהוָה, cf. שֵׁם בַּעַל.

⁹ *Fragmenta Hist. Græc.* iii. 569, 25.

¹⁰ Ibid. iv. 283, 9.

¹¹ Herod. i. 131, 199.

¹² 1 Kings xi. 5.

¹³ Judges iii. 12.

¹⁴ Jer. vii. 18. קִלְקַת הַשָּׁמַיִם.

¹⁵ Osiander, l. c. p. 472. Gildemeister, *Zeitschrift der D. M. G.* xxiv. pp. 180, 181; Lenormant, *Comptes-rendus des séances de l'Acad. des inscriptions et belles-lettres de l'année 1867*; Levy, *Zeitschrift der D. M. G.* xxiv. p. 189.

Another word, meaning originally king, which must have been fixed upon as a name of the Deity in prehistoric times, is the Hebrew *Melech*. We find it in *Moloch*, who was worshipped, not only at Carthage, in the Islands of Crete and Rhodes, but likewise in the valley of Hinnom. We find the same word in *Milcom*, the god of the Ammonites, who had a sanctuary in Mount Olivet; and the gods *Adrammelech* and *Anammelech*, to whom the Sepharvites burnt their children in the fire,¹ seem again but local varieties of the same ancient Semitic idol.

Adonâi, which in Hebrew means my lord, and in the Old Testament is used exclusively of Jehovah, appears in Phenicia as the name of the Supreme Deity, and after undergoing manifold mythological transformations, the same name has become familiar to us through the Greek tales about the beautiful youth Adonis, loved by Aphrodite, and killed by the wild boar of Ares.

Elyôn, which in Hebrew means the Highest, is used in the Old Testament as a predicate of God. It occurs also by itself as a name of Jehovah. Melchizedek is called emphatically the priest of *El elyôn*, the priest of the most high God.

But this name again is not restricted to Hebrew. It occurs in the Phenician cosmogony as *Eliun*, the highest God, the Father of Heaven, who was the father of *El*. Dr. Oppert has identified this Eliun with the *Illinus* mentioned by Damascius.

Another word used in the Bible,

sometimes in combination with *El*, and more frequently alone, as a name of the supreme deity, is *Shaddai*,² the Powerful. It comes from a kindred root to that which has yielded the substantive *Shed*, meaning demon in the language of the Talmud, and the plur. *Shedim*, a name for false gods or idols in the Old Testament. This name occurs as *Set* or *Sed* in the hieroglyphic inscriptions.³ It is there the name of a god introduced by the shepherds, and one of his surnames is given as *Baal*. The same deity *Shaddai*, the Powerful, has, by a clever conjecture, been discovered as one of the deities worshipped by the ancient Phenicians.⁴

While these names of the Deity and some others are shared in common by all, or by the most important members of the Semitic family, and must therefore have existed previous to the first Semitic separation, there are others peculiar to each branch.

Thus the name of Jehovah, or *Jahveh*,⁵ as it seems originally to have been pronounced, seems to me to be a divine name peculiar to the Jews. It is true that in a well-known passage of Lydus, *IAO*⁶ is said to have been the name of God among the Chaldæans. But granting that *IAO* was the same word as *Jahveh* or Jehovah or *Jah* (as in *Hallelu-jah*), may not Lydus by the Chaldæans have simply meant the Jews? If, as Sir Henry Rawlinson maintains, the name of Jehovah occurred in the Babylonian inscriptions, the case would be different; we should then have to admit that

¹ 2 Kings xvii. 31.

² De Vogüé, l. c. p. 160.

³ Bunsen, *Egypt*, iv. 221. De Vogüé, *Mélanges d'Archéologie*, p. 77.

⁴ Theodoret. *Quest. xv. ad. Exodum* (420 A.D.): καλοῦσι δὲ αὐτὸν Σαμαρεῖται ΙΑΒΕ, Ἰουδαῖοι δὲ ΙΑΩ. Diod. Sic. i. 94 (59 B.C.): παρὰ δὲ τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις Μωυσῆν τὸν Ἰαὼ ἐπικαλούμενον θεόν, κ.τ.λ.

⁵ Lydus, *De Mensibus*, iv. 38, 14: Οἱ Χαλδαῖοι τὸν θεὸν ΙΑΩ λέγουσι, ἀντὶ τοῦ φῶς νοητὸν τῇ φοινίκῳ γλώσσῃ καὶ ΣΑΒΑΩΘ δὲ πολλοῦ λέγεται, ὅσον ὁ ὑπὲρ τοὺς ἑπτὰ πόλους, τοὔτστιν ὁ δημιουργός. Bunsen, *Egypt*, iv. 193; Renan, *Sanchoniathon*, p. 44. note. And see Diodorus Siculus, i. 94, 2.

⁶ יְהוָה, or יְהוֹה.

this name, too, was fixed before the Semitic family was broken up; but until this is fully proved, we shall be justified in claiming *Jehovah* as a name of the Deity peculiar to Hebrew, or, at all events, as fixed by the Hebrew prophets in the sense of the one true God, opposed to all other gods of the Semitic race.¹

But whether we include or exclude the name of *Jehovah*, we have, I think, sufficient witnesses to establish what we wished to establish, viz., that there was a period during which the ancestors of the Semitic family had not yet been divided, whether in language or in religion. That period transcends the recollection of every one of the Semitic races in the same way as neither Hindus, Greeks, nor Romans have any recollection of the time when they spoke a common language, and worshipped their Father in heaven by a name that was as yet neither Sanskrit, nor Greek, nor Latin. But I do not hesitate to call this prehistoric period historical in the best sense of the word. It was a real period, because, unless it was real, all the realities of the Semitic languages and the Semitic religions, such as we find them after their separation, would be unintelligible. Hebrew, Syriac, and Arabic point to a common source as much as Sanskrit, Greek, and Latin; and unless we can bring ourselves to doubt that the Hindus, the Greeks, the Romans, and the Teutons derived the worship of their principal deity from their common Aryan sanctuary, we shall not be able to deny that there was likewise a primitive religion of the whole Semitic race, and that *El*, the Strong One in heaven, was invoked by the ancestors of all the Semitic races, before there were Babylonians in Babylon, Phenicians

in Sidon and Tyrus, before there were Jews in Mesopotamia or Jerusalem. The evidence of the Semitic is the same as that of the Aryan languages: the conclusion cannot be different.

We now come to the third nucleus of language, and as I hope to show, of religion also—to that which forms the foundation of the Turanian world. The subject is extremely difficult, and I confess I doubt whether I shall succeed in engaging your sympathy in favour of the religious opinions of people so strange, so far removed from us, as the Chinese, the Mongolians, the Samoyedes, the Finns, and Lapps. We naturally take an interest in the ancient history of the Aryan and Semitic nations, for after all, we are ourselves Aryan in language, and Semitic, at least to a certain extent, in religion. But what have we in common with the Turanians, with Chinese and Samoyedes? Very little, it may seem; and yet it is not very little, for it is our common humanity. It is not the yellow skin and the high cheekbones that make the man. Nay, if we look but steadily into those black Chinese eyes, we shall find that there, too, there is a soul that responds to a soul, and that the God whom they *mean* is the same God whom we *mean*, however helpless their utterance, however imperfect their worship.

If we take the religion of China as the earliest representative of Turanian worship, the question is, whether we can find any names of the Deity in Chinese which appear again in the religions and mythologies of other Turanian tribes, such as the Mandshus, the Mongolians, the Tatars, or Finns. I confess that, considering the changing and shifting character of the Turanian languages, considering also the long interval

¹ Lobeck, *Aglaophamus*, p. 461. Sir H. Rawlinson has kindly informed me that he doubts whether *Yahu*, which occurs in the sense of God in the Assyrian inscription, belonged properly to the Assyrian language. He thinks that it may have been borrowed from Syria, and adopted with the language, as were so many other foreign terms.

of time that must have passed between the first linguistic and religious settlement in China, and the later gradual and imperfect consolidation of the other Turanian races, I was not very sanguine in my expectation that any such names as *Dyaus pitar* among the Aryans, or *El* and *Baal* among the Shemites, could have survived in the religious traditions of the vast Turanian world. However, there is no reason why we should not look for such names in Chinese, Mongolian, and Turkish; still less, why we should pass them by with indifference or incredulity because, from the very nature of the case, their coincidence is not so striking and convincing as that of the Semitic and Aryan names of the Deity. There are in researches of this kind different degrees of certainty, and I am the very last person to slur them over, and to represent all our results as equally certain. But if we want to arrive at *terra firma*, we must not mind a plunge now and then; and if we wish to mount a ladder, we must not be afraid of taking the first step. The coincidences between the religious phraseology of Chinese and other Turanian languages are certainly not like the coincidences between Greek and Sanskrit, or between Hebrew and Phœnician; but they are such that they ought not to be neglected by the pioneers of a new science.

You remember that the popular worship of ancient China was a worship of single spirits, of powers, or, we might almost say, of names; the names of the most prominent powers of nature which are supposed to exercise an influence for good or evil on the life of man.

We find a belief in spirits of the sky, the sun, the moon, the stars, the earth, the mountains, the rivers; to say nothing as yet of the spirits of the departed. In China, where there always has been a strong tendency towards order and regularity, some kind of system has been superinduced by the recognition of two powers, one active, the other passive, one male, the other female, which comprehend everything, and which, in the mind of the more enlightened, tower high above the great crowd of minor spirits. These two powers are within and beneath and behind everything that is double in nature, and they have frequently been identified with heaven and earth. We can clearly see, however, that the spirit of heaven occupied from the beginning a much higher position than the spirit of the earth. It is in the historical books only, in the *Shu-king*,¹ that we are told that heaven and earth together are the father and mother of all things. In the ancient poetry *Heaven* alone is both father and mother.² This spirit of heaven is known in Chinese by the name of *Tien*, and wherever in other religions we should expect the name of the supreme deity, whether Jupiter or Allah, we find in Chinese the name of *Tien* or sky. This *Tien*, according to the Imperial Dictionary of Kanghee, means the Great One, he that dwells on high and regulates all below. We see in fact that *Tien*, originally the name of sky, has passed in Chinese through nearly all the phases, from the lowest to the highest, through which the Aryan name for sky, *dyaus*, passed in the poetry, the religion, mythology, and philosophy of India and

¹ In the *Shu-king* (3, 11) *Tien* is called *Shang-tien*, or High Heaven, which is synonymous with *Shang-te*, High Spirit, another very common name of the supreme deity. The Confucians never made any image of *Shang-te*, but the Taosse represented their (*Yah-hwang*) *Shang-te* under the human form.—Medhurst, *Inquiry*, p. 46.

² Chalmers, *Origin of the Chinese*, p. 14; Medhurst, l. c., p. 124; contrast between *Shins* and *Shangti*.

gusic, Mongolic, Tataric, and Finnic tribes. Everywhere we find a worship of the spirits of nature, of the spirits of the departed, though behind and above it there rises the belief in some higher power, known by different names, sometimes called the Father, the Old One, who is the Maker and Protector of the world, and who always resides in heaven. Chinese historians are the only writers who give us an account of the earlier history of some of these Turanian tribes, particularly of the Huns, whom they call *Hiongnu*, and of the Turks, whom they call *Tukiu*. They relate¹ that the Huns worshipped the sun, the moon, the spirits of the sky and the earth, and the spirits of the departed, and that their priests, the Shamans, possessed a power over the clouds, being able to bring down snow, hail, rain, and wind.²

Menander, a Byzantine historian, relates of the Turks that in his time they worshipped the fire, the water, and the earth, but that at the same time they believed in a God, the maker of the world, and offered to him sacrifices of camels, oxen, and sheep.

Still later we get some information from mediæval travellers, such as Plano Carpini and Marco Polo, who say that the Mongol tribes paid great reverence to the sun, the fire, and the water, but that they believed also in a great and powerful God, whom they called *Natagai* (Natigay) or *Itoga*.

In modern times we have chiefly to depend on Castrén, who had eyes to see and ears to hear what few other travellers would have seen or heard, or understood. Speaking of the Tungusic tribes, he says, 'they worship the sun, the moon, the stars, the earth, fire, the spirits of forests, rivers, and certain sacred

localities; they worship even images and fetishes, but with all this they retain a faith in a supreme being which they call *Buga*.'³ 'The Samoyedes,' he says, 'worship idols and various natural objects; but they always profess a belief in a higher divine power which they call *Num*.'

This deity which is called *Num* is also called *Juma* by the Samoyedes,⁴ and is in fact the same deity which in the grand mythology of Finland is known under the name of *Jumala*. The mythology of Finland has been more carefully preserved than the mythologies of all the other Altaic races, and in their ancient epic poems which have been kept up by oral tradition for centuries, and have been written down but very lately, we have magnificent descriptions of *Jumala*, the deity of the sky. *Jumala* meant originally the sky. It is derived, as Castrén has shown (p. 24), from *Juma*, thunder, and *la*, the place, meaning therefore the place of thunder, or the sky. It is used first of all for sky, secondly for god of the sky, and thirdly for gods in general. The very same word, only modified according to the phonetic rules of each language, occurs among the Lapps (p. 11), the Esthonians, the Syrjanes, the Tcheremissians, and the Votyakes (p. 24). We can watch the growth and the changes of this heavenly deity as we catch a glimpse here and there of the religious thoughts of these Altaic tribes. An old Samoyede woman who was asked by Castrén (p. 16) whether she ever said her prayers, replied: 'Every morning I step out of my tent and bow before the sun, and say: "When thou risest, I, too, rise from my bed." And every evening I say: "When thou sinkest down, I, too, sink down to rest."' That

¹ Castrén, *Vorlesungen über Finnische Mythologie*, p. 2.

² Ibid. l. c., p. 36.

³ Castrén, l. c., p. 13.

⁴ Is this the Russian 'bog,' god?

Greece. The sign of tien in Chinese is 天, and this is compounded of two signs: 大 *ta*, which means *great*, and — *yih*, which means *one*. The sky, therefore, was conceived as the One, the Peerless, and as the Great, the High, the Exalted. I remember reading in a Chinese book, 'As there is but one sky, how can there be many gods?' In fact, their belief in *Tien*, the spirit of heaven, moulded the whole of the religious phraseology of the Chinese. 'The glorious heaven,' we read, 'is called bright, it accompanies you wherever you go; the glorious heaven is called luminous, it goes wherever you roam.' *Tien* is called the ancestor of all things; the highest that is above. He is called the great framer, who makes things as a potter frames an earthen vessel. The Chinese also speak of the decrees and the will of Heaven, of the steps of Heaven or Providence. The sages who teach the people are sent by heaven, and Confucius himself is said to have been used by heaven as the 'alarm' of the world. The same Confucius, when on the brink of despondency, because no one would believe in him, knows of one comfort only; that comfort is: 'Heaven knows me.' It is clear from many passages that with Confucius *Tien* or the Spirit of Heaven was the supreme deity, and that he looked upon the other gods of the people, the spirits of the air, the mountains and the rivers, the spirits also of the departed, very much with the same feelings with which Sokrates regarded the mythological deities of Greece. Thus when asked on one occasion how the spirits should be served, he replied: 'If we are not able to serve men, how can we serve the spirits?' And at another time he said in his short and significant

manner: 'Respect the Gods, and keep them at a distance.'¹

We have now to see whether we can find any traces of this belief in a supreme spirit of heaven among the other branches of the Turanian class, the Mandshus, Mongolians, Tatars, Finns, or Lapps. As there are many names for sky in the Turanian dialects, it would not be absolutely necessary that we should find the same name which we found in Chinese: yet, if traces of that name could be found among Mongolians and Tatars, our argument would, no doubt, gain far greater strength. It is the same in all researches of comparative mythology. If we find the same conceptions, the same myths and legends, in India, Greece, Italy, and Germany, there is, no doubt, some presumption in favour of their common origin, but no more. But if we meet with gods and heroes, having the same names in the mythology of the Veda, and in the mythology of Greece and Rome and Germany, then we stand on firmer ground. We have then to deal with real facts that cannot be disputed, and all that remains is to explain them. In Turanian mythology, however, such facts are not easily brought together. With the exception of China, we know very little of the ancient history of the Turanian races, and what we know of their present state comes frequently from prejudiced observers. Besides, their old heathendom is fast disappearing before the advance of Buddhism, Mohammedanism, and Christianity. Yet if we take the accounts of the most trustworthy travellers in Central and Northern Asia, and more particularly the careful observations of Castrén, we cannot but recognise some most striking coincidences in the scattered notices of the religion of the Tun-

¹ Medhurst, *Reply to Dr. Boone*, p. 32.

was her prayer, perhaps the whole of her religious service;—a poor prayer it may seem to us, but not to her: for it made that old woman look twice at least every day away from earth and up to heaven; it implied that her life was bound up with a larger and higher life; it encircled the daily routine of her earthly existence with something of a divine halo. She herself was evidently proud of it, for she added, with a touch of self-righteousness: 'There are wild people who never say their morning and evening prayers.'

As in this case the deity of the sky is represented, as it were, by the sun, we see Jumala, under different circumstances, conceived as the deity of the sea. When walking one evening with a Samoyede sailor along the coast of the Polar Sea, Castrén asked him: 'Tell me, where is Num?' (i.e. Jumala.) Without a moment's hesitation the old sailor pointed to the dark, distant sea, and said: '*He is there.*'

Again, in the epic poem *Kalevala*, when the hostess of Pohjola is in labour, she calls on Jumala, and says: 'Come now into the bath, Jumala, into the warmth, O lord of the air!' (p. 19.)

At another time Jumala is the god of the air, and is invoked in the following lines (p. 21):

Harness now thyself, Jumala,
Ruler of the air, thy horses!
Bring them forth, thy rapid racers,
Drive the sledge with glittering colours,
Passing through our bones, our ankles,
Through our flesh that shakes and trembles,
Through our veins which seem all broken.
Knit the flesh and bones together,
Fasten vein to vein more firmly,
Let our joints be filled with silver,
Let our veins with gold be running!

In all these cases the deity invoked is the same, it is the deity of the sky, Jumala; but so indefinite is his character, that we can hardly say whether he is the god of the sky, or the sun, or the sea, or the

air, or whether he is a supreme deity reflected in all these aspects of nature.

However, you will naturally ask, where is there any similarity between the name of that deity and the Chinese deity of the sky, *Tien*? The common worship of *Jumala* may prove some kind of religious concentration among the different Altaic nations in the North of Asia, but it does not prove any prehistoric community of worship between those nations and the ancient inhabitants of China. It is true that the Chinese *Tien*, with its three meanings of sky, god of the sky, and god in general, is the exact counterpart of the North Turanian *Jumala*; but still we want more; we want traces of the same name of the deity in China, in Mongolia, and Tataria, just as we found the name of Jupiter in India and Italy, and the name of El in Babylon and Palestine.

Well, let us remember that Chinese is a monosyllabic language, and that the later Turanian dialects have entered into the agglutinative stage, that is to say, that they use derivative suffixes, and we shall then without much difficulty discover traces of the Chinese word *Tien*, with all its meanings, among some at least of the most important of the Turanian races. In the Mongolian language we find *Teng-ri*,¹ and this means, first, sky; then, god of the sky; then, god in general; and lastly spirit or demon, whether good or bad.

I think you will see the important bearing of this discovery, for it clinches the argument as nothing else could have clinched it. Unless we had found the same name of the supreme deity in the hymns of the Veda and in the prayer of the priestesses at Dodona, we could not have forced the conviction that it was originally one and the same

¹ Turkish 'tangry' (تنگری or تڭرى, *teñri*), the Yakute 'tangara.'

conception of divine personality, that had been worshipped long before the Hindus had entered India, or the dove had alighted on the oak of Dodona. The same applies to the Chinese *Tien* and the Mongolian *Tengri*. And this is not all. By a fortunate accident the Turanian name of *Tengri* can be traced back from the modern Mongolian to an earlier period. Chinese authors, in their accounts of the early history of the Huns, tell us that the title given by the Huns to their leaders was *tangli-kutu* (or *tehen-jü*).¹ This *tangli-kutu* meant in their language Son of Heaven, and you will remember that the same name, Son of Heaven, is still given to the Chinese Emperor.² It does not mean Son of God, but Emperor by the grace of God. Now the Chinese title is *tien-tze*, corresponding to the Hunnish *tangli-kutu*. Hence Hunnish *tang-li*, or Mongolian *tengri*, are the same as the Chinese *Tien*.

Again in the historical accounts which the Chinese give of the *Turkiu*, the ancestors of the Turks, it is said that they worshipped the Spirits of the Earth, and that they called these spirits *pu-teng-i-li*. Here the first syllable must be intended for earth; while in *teng-i-li* we have again the same word as the Mongolian *tengri*, only used, even at that early time, no longer in the sense of heaven, or god of heaven, but as a name of gods and spirits in general. We find a similar transition of meaning in the modern Yakute word *tangara*. It means the sky, and it means God; but among the Christian converts in Siberia, *tangara* is also used to signify 'the Saints.' The wild reindeer is called in Yakute God's reindeer, because it lives in the open air, or because God alone takes care of it.

Here, then, we have the same

kind of evidence which enabled us to establish a primitive Aryan and a primitive Semitic religion: we have a common name, and this name given to the highest deity, preserved in the monosyllabic language of China, and in the cognate, though agglutinative, dialects of some of the principal North Turanian tribes. We find in these words, not merely a vague similarity of sound and meaning, but, by watching their growth in Chinese, Mongolian, and Turkish, we are able to discover in them traces of organic identity. Everywhere they begin with the meaning of sky, they rise to the meaning of God, and they sink down again to the meaning of gods and spirits. The changes in the meaning of these words run parallel with the changes that took place in the religions of these nations, which in China, as elsewhere, combine the worship of numberless spirits with the belief in a supreme heavenly deity.

Did we allow ourselves to be guided by mere similarity of sound and meaning, it would be easy, for instance, to connect the name given to the highest deity by the Samoyedes, *Num*, the same as the Finnish *Juma(la)*, with the name used for God in the language of Tibet, *Nam*. This might seem a most important link, because it would help us to establish an original identity of religion among members of the North and South Turanian branches. But till we know something of the antecedents of the Tibetan word, till we know, as I said before, its organic growth, we cannot think of using it for such purposes.

If we now turn for a moment to the minor spirits believed in by the large masses in China, we shall easily see that they, too, in their character are strikingly like the spirits worshipped by the North

¹ Schott, *Ueber das Altaische Sprachgeschlecht*, p. 9.

² Schott, *Chinesische Literatur*, p. 63.

to the unschooled mind this was too great an effort. Something substantial and individual had to be retained when trees had to be spoken of as a forest, or days as a year; and in this transition period from individual to general conceptions, from the tangible to the comprehensible, from the real to the abstract, the shadow, the ghost, the power or the spirit of the forest, of the year, of the clouds, and the lightning, took possession of the human mind, and a class of beings was called into existence which stands before us as so-called deities in the religion and mythology of the ancient world.

The worship of ancestral spirits is likewise shared in common by the North Turanian races and the Chinese. I do not lay much stress on that fact, because the worship of the spirits of the departed is perhaps the most widely spread form of natural superstition all over the world. It is important, however, to observe that on this point also, which has always been regarded as most characteristic of Chinese religion, there is no difference between China and Northern Asia. Most of the Finnish and Altaic tribes, says Castrén (p. 119), cherish a belief that death, which they look upon with terrible fear, does not entirely destroy individual existence. And even those who do not profess belief in a future life, observe certain ceremonies which show that they think of the departed as still existing. They take food, dresses, oxen, knives, tinder-boxes, kettles, and sledges, and place them on the graves; nay, if pressed, they would confess that this is done to enable the departed to hunt, to fish, and to fight, as they used to do when alive. Lapps and Finns admit that the body decays, but they imagine that a new body is given to the dead in the lower world. Others speak of the departed as ghosts or spirits, who either stay in

the grave or in the realm of the dead, or who roam about on earth, particularly in the dead of night, and during storm and rain. They give signs of themselves in the howling of the wind, the rustling of leaves, the crackling of the fire, and in a thousand other ways. They are invisible to ordinary mortals, but the sorcerers or Shamans can see them, and can even divine their thoughts. It is curious that in general these spirits are supposed to be mischievous; and the most mischievous of all are the spirits of the departed priests (p. 123). They interrupt the sleep, they send illness and misfortunes, and they trouble the conscience of their relatives. Everything is done to keep them away. When the corpse has been carried out of the house, a red-hot stone is thrown after the departed, as a charm to prevent his return. The offerings of food and other articles deposited on the grave are accounted for by some as depriving the dead of any excuse for coming to the house, and fetching these things himself. Among the Tchuvashes a son uses the following invocation when offering sacrifice to the spirit of his father: 'We honour thee with a feast; look, here is bread for thee, and different kinds of meat; thou hast all thou canst want: but do not trouble us, do not come near us' (p. 122).

It is certainly a general belief that if they receive no such offerings, the dead revenge themselves by sending diseases and other misfortunes. The ancient Hiongnu or Huns killed the prisoners of war on the tombs of their leaders; for the Shamans assured them that the anger of the spirits could not be appeased otherwise. The same Huns had regular sacrifices in honour of their ancestral spirits. One tribe, the Topas, which had migrated from Siberia to Central Asia, sent ambassadors with offerings to the tombs of their ancestors.

Turanian tribes. These spirits in Chinese are called *Shin*,¹ which is really the name given to every invisible power or influence which can be perceived in operation in the universe. Some *Shins* or spirits receive real worship, which is graduated according to their dignity; others are looked upon with fear. The spirits of pestilence are driven out and dispersed by exorcism; many are only talked about. There are so many spirits that it seems impossible to fix their exact number. The principal classes² are the celestial spirits (*tien shin*), the terrestrial spirits (*ti ki*), and the ancestral spirits (*jin kwei*), and this is the order³ in which they are ranked according to their dignity. Among celestial spirits (*tien shin*) we find the spirits of the sun and the moon and the stars, the clouds, wind, thunder, and rain; among terrestrial spirits, those of the mountains, the fields, the grain, the rivers, the trees, the year. Among the departed spirits are those of the emperors, the sages, and other public benefactors, which are to be revered by the whole nation, while each family has its own *manes* which are treated with special reverence and honoured by many superstitious rites.⁴

The same state of religious feeling is exhibited among the North Turanian tribes, only without those minute distinctions and regulations in which the Chinese mind delights. The Samoyedes, as we saw, believed in a supreme god of heaven, called *Num*; but Castrén, who lived so long among them, says: 'The chief deities invoked by their priests or

sorcerers, the Shamans, are the so-called *Tadebejos*,⁵ invisible spirits dwelling in the air, the earth, the water, and everywhere in nature. I have heard many a Samoyede say that they were merely the spirits of the departed, but others look upon them as a class of inferior deities.'

The same scholar tells us (p. 105) that 'the mythology of the Finns is flooded with names of deities. Every object in nature has a genius, called *haltia*, which is supposed to be its creator and protector. These spirits were not tied to these outward objects, but were free to roam about, and had a body and soul, and their own well-marked personality. Nor did their existence depend on the existence of a single object; for though there was no object in nature without a genius, the genius was not confined to any single object, but comprehended the whole class or genus. This mountain-ash, this stone, this house has its own genius, but the same genius cares for all other mountain-ashes, stones, and houses.'

We have only to translate this into the language of logic, and we shall understand at once what has happened here as elsewhere in the growth of religious ideas and mythological names. What we call a general conception, or what used to be called '*essentia generalis*,' 'the tree-hood,' 'the stone-hood,' 'the house-hood,' in fact, the genus tree, stone, and house, is what the Finns and Samoyedes call the genius, the *haltia*, the *tadebejo*, and what the Chinese call *Shin*. We speak very glibly of an *essentia generalis*, but

¹ Medhurst, *Reply*, p. 11.

² *Ibid.* l. c., p. 21.

³ *Ibid.* l. c., p. 22. The spirits of heaven are called *shin*; the spirits of earth are called *ki*; when men die their wandering and transformed souls and spirits are called *kwei*.

⁴ *Ibid.* i. p. 43. The great sacrifices are offered only to *Te* or *Shang-te*, the same as *Tien*. The five *Te* which used to be joined with *Shang-te* at the great border sacrifice were only the five powers or qualities of *Shang-te* personified. Since the year A.D. 1369 the worship of these five *Te* has been abolished.

⁵ Castrén, *Finnische Mythologie*, p. 122.

Their tombs were protected with high palings, to prevent the living from clambering in, and the dead from clambering out. Some of these tombs were magnificently adorned,¹ and at last grew almost, and in China² altogether, into temples where the spirits of the departed were actually worshipped. All this takes place by slow degrees; it begins with placing a flower on the tomb; it ends with worshipping the spirits of departed emperors³ as equals of the Supreme Spirit, the *Shang-te* or *Tien*, and as enjoying a divine rank far above other spirits or *Shins*. The difference, at first sight, between the minute ceremonial of China and the homely worship of Finns and Lapps may seem enormous; but if we trace both back as far as we can, we see that the early stages of their religious belief are curiously alike. First, a worship of heaven, as the emblem of the most exalted conception which the untutored mind of man can entertain, expanding with the expanding thoughts of its worshippers, and eventually leading and lifting the soul from horizon to horizon, to a belief in that which is beyond all horizons, a belief in that which is infinite. Secondly, a belief in deathless spirits or powers of nature; which supplies the more immediate

and every-day wants of the religious instinct of man, satisfies the imagination, and furnishes the earliest poetry with elevated themes. Lastly, a belief in the existence of ancestral spirits; which implies, consciously or unconsciously, in a spiritual or in a material form, that which is one of the life-springs of all religion, a belief in immortality.

Allow me in conclusion to recapitulate shortly the results of this Lecture.

We found, first of all, that there is a natural connection between language and religion, and that therefore the classification of languages is applicable to the ancient religions of the world.

We found, secondly, that there was a common Aryan religion before the separation of the Aryan race; a common Semitic religion before the separation of the Semitic race; and a common Turanic religion before the separation of the Chinese and the other tribes belonging to the Turanian class. We found, in fact, three ancient centres of religion as we had found before three ancient centres of language, and we have thus gained, I believe, a truly historical basis for a scientific classification of the principal religions of the world.

¹ Castrén, l. c., p. 122.

² When an emperor died, and men erected an ancestral temple, and set up a parental tablet (as a resting-place for the 'shin' or spirit of the departed), they called him *Te*.—Medhurst, *Inquiry*, p. 7; from the *Le-ke*, vol. i. p. 49.

³ Medhurst, *Inquiry*, p. 45.

FOURTH LECTURE,

Delivered at the Royal Institution, March 12, 1870.

WHEN I came to deliver the first of this short course of lectures, I confess I felt sorry for having undertaken so difficult a task; and if I could have withdrawn from it with honour, I should gladly have done so. Now that I have only this one lecture left, I feel equally sorry, and I wish I could continue my course in order to say something more of what I wished to say, and what in four lectures I could say but very imperfectly. From the announcement of my lectures you must have seen that in what I called 'An Introduction to the Science of Religion' I did not intend to treat of more than some preliminary questions. I chiefly wanted to show in what sense a truly scientific study of religion was possible, what materials there are to enable us to gain a trustworthy knowledge of the principal religions of the world, and according to what principles these religions may be classified. It would perhaps have been more interesting to some of my hearers if we had rushed at once into the ancient temples to look at the broken idols of the past, and to discover, if possible, some of the fundamental ideas that found expression in the ancient systems of faith and worship. But in order to explore with real advantage any ruins, whether of stone or of thought, it is necessary that we should know where to look and how to look. In most works on the history of ancient religions we are driven about like forlorn tourists in a vast museum where ancient and modern statues, gems of Oriental and European workmanship, ori-

ginal works of art and mere copies are piled up together, and at the end of our journey we only feel bewildered and disheartened. We have seen much, no doubt, but we carry away very little. It is better, before we enter into these labyrinths, that we should spend a few hours in making up our minds as to what we really want to see and what we may pass by; and if in these introductory lectures we have arrived at a clear view on these points, you will find hereafter that our time has not been spent in vain.

Throughout these introductory lectures you will have observed that I have carefully abstained from entering on the domain of what I call *Theoretic*, as distinguished from *Comparative Theology*. Theoretic theology, or, as it is sometimes called, the philosophy of religion, has, as far as I can judge, its right place at the end, not at the beginning of comparative theology. I make no secret of my own conviction that a study of comparative theology will produce with regard to theoretic theology the same revolution which a study of comparative philology has produced in what used to be called the philosophy of language. You know how all speculations on the nature of language, on its origin, its development, its natural growth and inevitable decay have had to be taken up afresh from the very beginning, after the new light thrown on the history of language by the comparative method. I look forward to the same results with respect to philosophical enquiries into the nature of religion, its origin, and its development. I do not mean

to say that all former speculations on these subjects will become useless. Plato's *Cratylus*, even the *Hermes* of Harris, and Horne Tooke's *Diversions of Purley* have not become useless after the work done by Grimm and Bopp, by Humboldt and Bunsen. But I believe that philosophers who speculate on the origin of religion and on the psychological conditions of faith, will in future write more circumspectly, and with less of that dogmatic assurance which has hitherto distinguished so many speculations on the philosophy of religion, not excepting those of Schelling and Hegel. Before the rise of geology it was easy to speculate on the origin of the earth; before the rise of glossology, any theories on the revealed, the mimetic, the interjectional, or the conventional origin of language might easily be held and defended. Not so now, when facts have filled the place that was formerly open to theories, and when those who have worked most carefully among the *débris* of the earth or the strata of languages are most reluctant to approach the great problem of the first beginnings.

So much in order to explain why in this introductory course I have confined myself within narrower limits than some of my hearers seem to have expected. And now, as I have but one hour left, I shall try to make the best use of it I can, by devoting it entirely to a point on which I have not yet touched, viz. on the right spirit in which ancient religions ought to be studied and interpreted.

No judge, if he had before him the worst of criminals, would treat him as most historians and theologians have treated the religions of the world. Every act in the lives of their founders, which shows that they were but men, is eagerly seized and judged without mercy; every doctrine that is not carefully guarded is interpreted in the worst sense that it will bear; every act of

worship that differs from our own way of serving God is held up to ridicule and contempt. And this is not done by accident, but with a set purpose, nay, with something of that artificial sense of duty which stimulates the counsel for the defence to see nothing but an angel in his own client, and anything but an angel in the plaintiff on the other side. The result has been—as it could not be otherwise—a complete miscarriage of justice, an utter misapprehension of the real character and purpose of the ancient religions of mankind; and, as a necessary consequence, a failure in discovering the peculiar features which really distinguish Christianity from all the religions of the world, and secure to its founder his own peculiar place in the history of the world, far away from *Vasishttha*, Zoroaster, and Buddha, from Moses and Moham-med, from Confucius and Lao-tse. By unduly depreciating all other religions, we have placed our own in a position which its founder never intended for it; we have torn it away from the sacred context of the history of the world; we have ignored, or wilfully narrowed, the sundry times and divers manners in which, in times past, God spake unto the fathers by the prophets; and instead of recognising Christianity as coming in the fulness of time, and as the fulfilment of the hopes and desires of the whole world, we have brought ourselves to look upon its advent as the only broken link in that unbroken chain which is rightly called the Divine government of the world. Nay, worse than this: there are people who, from mere ignorance of the ancient religions of mankind, have adopted a doctrine more unchristian than any that could be found in the pages of the religious books of antiquity, viz. that all the nations of the earth, before the rise of Christianity, were mere outcasts, forsaken and forgotten of their Father in heaven, without a knowledge of God, with-

out a hope of salvation. If a comparative study of the religions of the world produced but this one result, that it drove this godless heresy out of every Christian heart, and made us see again in the whole history of the world the eternal wisdom and love of God towards all His creatures, it would have done a good work. And it is high time that this good work should be done. We have learnt to do justice to the ancient poetry, the political institutions, the legal enactments, the systems of philosophy, and the works of art of nations differing from ourselves in many respects; we have brought ourselves to value even the crude and imperfect beginnings in all these spheres of mental activity; and I believe we have thus learnt lessons from ancient history which we could not have learnt anywhere else. We can admire the temples of the ancient world, whether in Egypt, Babylon, or Greece; we can stand in raptures before the statues of Phidias; and only when we approach the religious conceptions which find their expression in the temples of Minerva and in the statues of Jupiter, we turn away with pity or scorn, we call their gods mere idols and images, and class their worshippers—Perikles, Phidias, Sokrates, and Plato—with the worshippers of stocks and stones. I do not deny that the religions of the Babylonians, Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans were imperfect and full of errors, particularly in their later stages, but I maintain that the fact of these ancient people having any religion at all, however imperfect, raises them higher, and brings them nearer to us, than all their works of art, all their poetry, all their philosophy. Neither their art nor their poetry nor their philosophy would have been possible without religion; and if we will but look without prejudice, if we will but judge as we ought always to judge, with un-

wearying love and charity, we shall be surprised at that new world of beauty and truth which, like the azure of a vernal sky, rises before us from behind the clouds of the ancient mythologies.

We can speak freely and fearlessly; we can afford to be charitable. There was a time when it was otherwise. There was a time when people imagined that truth, particularly the highest truth, the truth of religion, could only conquer by blind zeal, by fire and sword. At that time all idols were to be overthrown, their altars to be destroyed, and their worshippers to be cut to pieces. But there came a time when the sword was to be put up into his place. . . . And if even after that time there was a work to work and a fight to fight, which required the fiery zeal of apostles and martyrs, that time also is now past; the conquest is gained, and we have time to reflect calmly on what is past and what is still to come. We are no longer afraid of Baal or Jupiter. Our dangers and our difficulties are now of a very different kind. If we believe that there is a God, and that He created heaven and earth, and that He ruleth the world by His unceasing providence, we cannot believe that millions of human beings, all created like ourselves in the image of God, were, in their time of ignorance, so utterly abandoned that their whole religion was falsehood, their whole worship a farce, their whole life a mockery. An honest and independent study of the religions of the world will teach us that it was not so—will teach us the same lesson which it taught St. Augustine, that there is no religion which does not contain some grains of truth. Nay, it will teach us more; it will enable us to see in the history of the ancient religions, more clearly than anywhere else, the *Divine education of the human race*.

I know this is a view which has been much objected to, but I hold

it as strongly as ever. If we must not read in the history of the whole human race the daily lessons of a Divine teacher and guide, if there is no purpose, no increasing purpose in the succession of the religions of the world, then we might as well shut up the godless book of history altogether, and look upon men as no better than the grass which is to-day in the field and to-morrow is cast into the oven. Man would then be indeed of less value than the sparrows, for none of them is forgotten before God. But those who imagine that, in order to make sure of their own salvation, they must have a great gulf fixed between themselves and all the other nations of the world—between their own religion and the religions of Zoroaster, Buddha, or Confucius—can hardly be aware how strongly the interpretation of the history of the religions of the world, as an education of the human race, can be supported by authorities before which they themselves would probably bow in silence. We need not appeal to a living bishop to prove the soundness, or to a German philosopher to prove the truth, of this view. If we wanted authorities we could appeal to Popes, to the Fathers of the Church, to the Apostles themselves, for they have all upheld the same view with no uncertain voice.

I pointed out before that the simultaneous study of the Old and the New Testament, with an occasional reference to the religion and philosophy of Greece and Rome, had supplied Christian divines with some of the most useful lessons for a wider comparison of all the religions of the world. In studying the Old Testament, and observing in it the absence of some of the most essential truths of Christianity, they, too, had asked with surprise why the interval between the fall of man and his redemption had

been so long, why men were allowed so long to walk in darkness, and whether the heathens had really no place in the counsels of God. Here is the answer of a Pope, of Leo the Great¹ (440-461):

Let those who with impious murmurings find fault with the Divine dispensations, and who complain about the lateness of Our Lord's nativity, cease from their grievances, as if what was carried out in this last age of the world had not been impending in time past. . . . What the apostles preached, the prophets had announced before, and what has always been believed cannot be said to have been fulfilled too late. By this delay of His work of salvation the wisdom and love of God have only made us more fitted for His call; so that, what had been announced before by many signs and words and mysteries during so many centuries, should not be doubtful or uncertain in the days of the Gospel. . . . God has not provided for the interests of men by a new counsel or by a late compassion; but He had instituted from the beginning for all men one and the same path of salvation.

This is the language of a Pope—of Leo the Great. Now let us hear what St. Irenæus says, and how he explains to himself the necessary imperfection of the early religions of mankind. 'A mother,' he says, 'may indeed offer to her infant a complete repast, but her infant cannot yet receive the food which is meant for full-grown men. In the same manner God might indeed from the beginning have offered to man the truth in its completeness, but man was unable to receive it, for he was still a child.'

If this, too, is considered a presumptuous reading of the counsels of God, we have, as a last appeal, the words of St. Paul, that 'the law was the schoolmaster to the Jews,' joined with the words of St. Peter, 'Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him.'

But, as I said before, we need not appeal to any authorities if we will but read the records of the ancient

¹ Hardwick, *Christ and other Masters*, i. 85.

religions of the world with an open heart and in a charitable spirit—in a spirit that thinketh no evil, but rejoices in the truth wherever it can be found.

I suppose that most of us, sooner or later in life, have felt how the whole world—this wicked world, as we call it—is changed as if by magic, if once we can make up our mind to give men credit for good motives, never to be suspicious, never to think evil, never to think ourselves better than our neighbours. Trust a man to be true and good, and, even if he is not, your trust will tend to make him true and good. It is the same with the religions of the world. Let us but once make up our mind to look in them for what is true and good, and we shall hardly know our old religions again. If they are the work of the devil, as many of us have been brought up to believe, then never was there a kingdom so divided against itself from the very beginning. There is no religion—or if there is, I do not know it—which does not say, 'Do good, avoid evil.' There is none which does not contain what Rabbi Hillel called the quintessence of all religions, the simple warning, 'Be good, my boy.' 'Be good, my boy,' may seem a very short catechism; but let us add to it, 'Be good, my boy, for God's sake,' and we have in it very nearly the whole of the Law and the Prophets.

I wish I could read you the extracts I have collected from the sacred books of the ancient world, grains of truth more precious to me than grains of gold; prayers so simple and so true that we could all join in them if we once accustomed ourselves to the strange sounds of Sanskrit or Chinese. I can to-day give you a few specimens only.

Here is a prayer of *Vasishtha*, a Vedic prophet, addressed to *Varuna*, the Greek *Οὐρανός*, an ancient name of the sky and of the god who resides in the sky.

I shall read you one verse at least in the original—it is the 86th hymn of the seventh book of the *Rig-Veda*—so that you may hear the very sounds which more than three thousand years ago were uttered for the first time in a village on the borders of the *Sutledge*, then called the *Satadru*, by a man who felt as we feel, who spoke as we speak, who believed in many points as we believe—a dark-complexioned Hindu, shepherd, poet, priest, patriarch, and certainly a man who, in the noble army of prophets, deserves a place by the side of David. And does it not show the indestructibility of the spirit, if we see how the waves which, by a poetic impulse, he started on the vast ocean of thought have been heaving and spreading and widening, till after centuries and centuries they strike against our shores and tell us, in accents that cannot be mistaken, what passed through the mind of that ancient Aryan poet when he felt the presence of an almighty God, the maker of heaven and earth, and felt at the same time the burden of his sin, and prayed to his God that He might take that burden from him, that He might forgive him his sin. When you listen to the strange sounds of this Vedic hymn, you are listening, even in this Royal Institution, to spirit-rapping—to real spirit-rapping. *Vasishtha* is really among us again, and if you will accept me as interpreter, you will find that we can all understand what the old poet wished to say :

*Dhīrā tv asya mahinā gantūmshi,
vi yas tastambha rodasi kid urvi,
pra nākam rishvam nunude brihantam,
dvitā nakshatram paprathak ka bhūma.*

Wise and mighty are the works of him who stemmed asunder the wide firmaments (heaven and earth). He lifted on high the bright and glorious heaven; he stretched out apart the starry sky and the earth.

Do I say this to my own self? How can I get near unto *Varuna*? Will he accept my offering without displeasure? When shall I, with a quiet mind, see him propitiated?

I ask, O Varuna, wishing to know this my sin; I go to ask the wise. The sages all tell me the same: 'Varuna it is who is angry with thee.'

Was it for an old sin, O Varuna, that thou wishest to destroy thy friend, who always praises thee? Tell me, thou unconquerable Lord! and I will quickly turn to thee with praise, freed from sin.

Absolve us from the sins of our fathers, and from those which we committed with our own bodies. Release Vasishtha, O King, like a thief who has feasted on stolen cattle; release him like a calf from the rope.

It was not our own doing, O Varuna, it was a slip; an intoxicating draught, passion, dice, thoughtlessness. The old is there to mislead the young; even sleep is not free from mischief.

Let me without sin give satisfaction to the angry god, like a slave to his bounteous lord. The lord god enlightened the foolish; he, the wisest, leads his worshipper to wealth.

O lord Varuna, may this song go well to thy heart! May we prosper in keeping and acquiring! Protect us, O gods, always with your blessings.

I am not blind to the blemishes of this ancient prayer, but I am not blind to its beauty either, and I think you will admit that the discovery of even one such poem among the hymns of the Rig-Veda, and the certainty that such a poem was composed in India at least three thousand years ago, without any inspiration but that which all can find who seek for it if haply they may find it, is well worth the labour of a life. It shows that man was never forsaken of God, and that conviction is worth more to the student of history than all the dynasties of Egypt and Babylon, worth more than all lacustrine villages, worth more than the skulls and jaw-bones of Neanderthal or Abbeville.

My next extract will be from the Zendavesta, the sacred book of the Zoroastrians, older in its language than the cuneiform inscriptions of Cyrus, Darius, Xerxes, and still be-

lieved in by a small remnant of the Persian race, now settled at Bombay and known all over the world by the name of Parsis.¹

I ask thee, tell me the truth, O Ahura! Who was from the beginning the father of the pure creatures? Who has made a path for the sun and for the stars? Who (but thou) makes the moon to increase and to decrease? That, O Mazda, and other things, I wish to know.

I ask thee, tell me the truth, O Ahura! Who holds the earth and the clouds that they do not fall? Who holds the sea and the trees? Who has given swiftness to the wind and the clouds? Who is the creator of the good spirit?

I ask thee, tell me the truth, O Ahura! Who has made the kindly light and the darkness, who has made the kindly sleep and the awaking? Who has made the mornings, the noons, and the nights? Who has made him who ponders on the measure of the laws?

We cannot always be certain that we have found the right sense of the Zendavesta, for its language is full of difficulties; yet so much is clear, that in the Bible of Zoroaster every man is called upon to take his part in the great battle between Good and Evil which is always going on, and is assured that in the end good will prevail.

What shall I quote from Buddha? for there is so much in his sayings and his parables that it is indeed difficult to choose. In a collection of his sayings, written in Pāli—of which I have lately published a translation²—we read:

1 All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows him as the wheel follows the foot of him who draws the cart.

49 As the bee collects honey and departs without injuring the flower, so let the sage dwell on earth.

62 'These sons belong to me, and this wealth belongs to me,' with such thoughts a fool is tormented. He himself does not belong to himself: how much less sons and wealth!

¹ *Yasna*, xlv. 3, ed. Brockhaus, p. 130; Spiegel, *Yasna*, p. 146; Haug, *Essays*, p. 150.

² *Buddhaghosha's Parables*, translated from Burmese by Captain Rogers; with an Introduction containing Buddha's 'Dhammapada' or 'Path of Virtue,' translated from Pāli by Max Müller. London: Trübner & Co., 1870.

121 Let no man think lightly of evil, saying in his heart, It will not come nigh unto me. Let no man think lightly of good, saying in his heart, It will not benefit me. Even by the falling of water-drops a water-pot is filled.

173 He whose evil deeds are covered by good deeds, brightens up this world like the moon when she rises from behind the clouds.

223 Let a man overcome anger by love, evil by good, the greedy by liberality, the liar by truth.

264 Not by tonsure does an undisciplined man become a saint: can a man be a saint who is still held captive by desires and greediness?

394 What is the use of platted hair, O fool? what of the raiment of goat-skins? Within thee there is ravening, but the outside thou makest clean.

In no religion are we so constantly reminded of our own as in Buddhism, and yet in no religion has man been drawn away so far from the truth as in the religion of Buddha. Buddhism and Christianity are indeed the two opposite poles with regard to the most essential points of religion: *Buddhism* ignoring all feeling of dependence on a higher power, and therefore denying the very existence of a supreme Deity; *Christianity* resting entirely on a belief in God as the Father, in the Son of Man as the Son of God, and making us all children of God by faith in His Son. Yet between the language of Buddha and his disciples and the language of Christ and His apostles there are strange coincidences. Even some of the Buddhist legends and parables sound as if taken from the New Testament, though we know that many of them existed before the beginning of the Christian era.

Thus, one day Ānanda, the disciple of Buddha, after a long walk in the country, meets with Mātangī, a woman of the low caste of the Kāndālas, near a well, and asks her for some water. She tells him what she is, and that she must not come

near him. But he replies, 'My sister, I ask not for thy caste or thy family, I ask only for a draught of water.' She afterwards becomes herself a disciple of Buddha.¹

While in the New Testament we read, 'If thy right eye offend thee pluck it out and cast it from thee,' we find among the Buddhists a parable of a young priest whose bright and lovely eyes proved too attractive to a lady whom he visits, and who thereupon plucks out his right eye and shows it to her that she may see how hideous it is.²

According to Buddha, the motive of all our actions should be *pity* or *love* for our neighbour.

And as in Buddhism, so even in the writings of Confucius we find again what we value most in our own religion. I shall quote but one saying of the Chinese sage:³

'What you do not like when done to yourself, do not do that to others.'

One passage only from the founder of the second religion in China, from Lao-tse (cap. 25):

There is an infinite Being, which existed before heaven and earth.

How calm it is! how free!

It lives alone, it changes not.

It moves everywhere, but it never suffers.

We may look on it as the Mother of the Universe.

I, I know not its name.

In order to give it a title, I call it *Tao* (the Way).

When I try to give it a name, I call it *Great*.

After calling it *Great*, I call it *Fugitive*.

After calling it *Fugitive*, I call it *Distant*.

After calling it *Distant*, I say it comes back to me.

Need I say that Greek and Roman writers are full of the most exalted sentiments on religion and morality, in spite of their mythology and in spite of their idolatry? When Plato says that man ought to strive after likeness with God, do you think that he thought of Jupiter, or Mars, or Mercury?

¹ Burnouf, *Introduction à l'Histoire du Bouddhisme*, p. 205.

² See *Kathā-sarit-sāgara*, ed. Brockhaus, vi. 28, p. 14.

³ Dr. Legge's *Life and Teachings of Confucius*, p. 47.

When another poet exclaimed that the conscience is a god for all men, was he so very far from a knowledge of the true God ?

I wish we could explore together in this spirit the ancient religions of mankind, for I feel convinced that the more we know of them, the more we shall see that there is not one which is entirely false ; nay, that in one sense every religion was a true religion, being the only religion which was possible at the time, which was compatible with the language, the thoughts, and the sentiments of each generation, which was appropriate to the age of the world. I know full well the objections that will be made to this. Was the worship of Moloch, it will be said, a true religion when they burnt their sons and their daughters in the fire to their gods ? Was the worship of Mylitta, or is the worship of Kâlî a true religion, when within the sanctuary of their temples they committed abominations that must be nameless ? Was the teaching of Buddha a true religion, when men were asked to believe that the highest reward of virtue and meditation consisted in a complete annihilation of the soul ? Such arguments may tell in party warfare, though even there they have provoked fearful retaliation. Can that be a true religion, it has been answered, which consigned men of holy innocence to the flames, because they held that the Son was like unto the Father, but not the same as the Father, or because they would not worship the Virgin and the Saints ? Can that be a true religion which screened the same nameless crimes behind the sacred walls of monasteries ? Can that be a true religion which taught the eternity of punishment without any hope of pardon or salvation for the sinner, however penitent ? People who judge of religions in that spirit will never understand their real purport, will never reach their sacred springs. These are the excrescences,

the inevitable excrescences of religion. We might as well judge of the health of a people from its hospitals, or of its morality from its prisons. If we want to judge of a religion, we must try to study it as much as possible in the mind of its founder ; and when that is impossible, as it is but too often, we must try to find it in the lonely chamber and the sick-room, rather than in the colleges of augurs and the councils of priests.

If we do this, and if we bear in mind that religion must accommodate itself to the intellectual capacities of those whom it is to influence, we shall be surprised to find so much of true religion where we only expected degrading superstition or an absurd worship of idols.

The intention of religion, wherever we meet it, is always holy. However imperfect, however childish a religion may be, it always places the human soul in the presence of God ; and however imperfect and however childish the conception of God may be, it always represents the highest ideal of perfection which the human soul, for the time being, can reach and grasp. Religion therefore places the human soul in the presence of its highest ideal, it lifts it above the level of ordinary goodness, and produces at least a yearning after a higher and better life—a life in the light of God. The expression that is given to these early manifestations of religious sentiment is no doubt frequently childish : it may be irreverent or even repulsive. But has not every father to learn the lesson of a charitable interpretation in watching the first stammerings of religion in his children ? Why, then, should people find it so difficult to learn the same lesson in the ancient history of the world, and to judge in the same spirit the religious utterances of the childhood of the human race ? Who does not recollect the startling and seemingly irreverent questionings

of children about God, and who does not know how perfectly guiltless the child's mind is of real irreverence? Such outbursts of infantine religion hardly bear repeating. I shall only mention one instance. I well recollect the dismay which was created by a child exclaiming, 'Oh! I wish there was at least *one* room in the house where I could play alone, and where God could not see me!' People who heard it were shocked; but to my mind, I confess, this childish exclamation sounded more wonderful than even the Psalm of David, 'Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?'

It is the same with the childish language of ancient religion. We say very calmly that God is omniscient and omnipresent. Hesiod speaks of the sun as the eye of Zeus that sees and perceives everything. Aratus wrote, 'Full of Zeus are all the streets, all the markets of men; full of Him is the sea and the harbours . . . and we are also His offspring.'

A Vedic poet, though of more modern date than the one I quoted before, speaking of the same Varuna whom Vasishtha invoked, says: 'The great lord of these worlds sees as if he were near. If a man thinks he is walking by stealth, the gods know it all. If a man stands or walks or rides, if he goes to lie down or to get up, what two people sitting together whisper, King Varuna knows it, he is there as a third. This earth, too, belongs to Varuna, the king, and this wide sky with its ends far apart. The two seas (the sky and the ocean) are Varuna's loins; he is also contained in this small drop of water. He who should flee far beyond the sky, even he would not be rid of Varuna, the king. His spies proceed from heaven towards this world; with thousand eyes they overlook this earth. King Varuna sees all this,

what is between heaven and earth, and what is beyond. He has counted the twinklings of our eyes. As a player throws down the dice, he settles all things.'

I do not deny that there is in this hymn much that is childish, that it contains expressions unworthy of the majesty of the Deity; but if I look at the language and the thoughts of the people who composed these hymns more than three thousand years ago, I wonder rather at the happy and pure expression which they have given to these deep thoughts than at the occasional harshnesses which jar upon our ears.

Ancient language is a difficult instrument to handle, particularly for religious purposes. It is impossible in human language to express abstract ideas except by metaphor, and it is not too much to say that the whole dictionary of ancient religion is made up of metaphors. With us these metaphors are all forgotten. We speak of spirit without thinking of breath, of heaven without thinking of the sky, of pardon without thinking of a release, of revelation without thinking of a veil. But in ancient language every one of these words, nay, every word that does not refer to sensuous objects, is still in a chrysalis stage: half material and half spiritual, and rising and falling in its character according to the varying capacities of speakers and hearers. Here is a constant source of misunderstandings, many of which have maintained their place in the religion and in the mythology of the ancient world. There are two distinct tendencies to be observed in the growth of ancient religion. There is, on the one side, the struggle of the mind against the material character of language, a constant attempt to strip words of their coarse covering, and fit them, by main force, for the purposes of abstract thought.

¹ *Chips from a German Workshop*, i. 41. Atharva-Veda, iv. 16.

But there is, on the other side, a constant relapse from the spiritual into the material, and, strange to say, a predilection for the material sense instead of the spiritual. This action and reaction has been going on in the language of religion from the earliest times, and it is at work even now.

It seems at first a fatal element in religion that it cannot escape from this flux and reflux of human thought, which is repeated at least once in every generation between father and son, between mother and daughter; but if we watch it more closely we shall find, I think, that this flux and reflux constitutes the very life of religion.

Place ourselves in the position of those who first are said to have worshipped the sky. We say that they worshipped the sky, or that the sky was their god; and in one sense this is true, but in a sense very different from that which is usually attached to such statements. If we use 'god' in the sense which it has now, then to say that the sky was their god is to say what is simply impossible. We might as well say that with them Spirit meant nothing but air. Such a word as God, in our sense of the word—such a word even as *deus* and *θεός* in Latin and Greek, or *deva* in Sanskrit, which could be used as a general predicate—did not and could not exist at that early time in the history of thought and speech. If we want to understand ancient religion, we must first try to understand ancient language. Let us remember, then, that the first materials of language supply expressions for such impressions only as are received through the senses. If, therefore, there was a root meaning to burn, to be bright, to warm, such a root might supply a recognised name for the sun and for the sky. But let us now imagine, as well as we can, the process which went on in the human mind before the name of sky could be torn away

from its material object and be used as the name of something totally different from the sky. There was in the heart of man, from the very first, a feeling of incompleteness, of weakness, of dependence, whatever we like to call it in our abstract language. We can explain it as little as we can explain why the newborn child feels the cravings of hunger and thirst. But it was so from the first, and is so even now. Man knows not whence he comes and whither he goes. He looks for a guide, for a friend; he wearies for some one on whom he can rest; he wants something like a father in heaven. In addition to all the impressions which he received from the outer world, there was in the heart of man a stronger impulse from within—a sigh, a yearning, a call for something that should not come and go like everything else, that should be before, and after, and for ever, that should hold and support everything, that should make man feel at home in this strange world. Before this vague yearning could assume any definite shape it wanted a name: it could not be fully grasped or clearly conceived except by naming it. But where to look for a name? No doubt the storehouse of language was there, but from every name that was tried the mind of man shrank back because it did not fit, because it seemed to fetter rather than to wing the thought that fluttered within and called for light and freedom. But when at last a name or even many names were tried and chosen, let us see what took place, as far as the mind of man was concerned. A certain satisfaction, no doubt, was gained by having a name or several names, however imperfect; but these names, like all other names, were but signs—poor, imperfect signs; they were predicates, and very partial predicates, of various small portions only of that vague and vast something which slumbered in the mind.

When the name of the brilliant sky had been chosen, as it has been chosen at one time or other by nearly every nation upon earth, was sky the full expression of that within the mind which wanted expression? Was the mind satisfied? Had the sky been recognised as its god? Far from it. People knew perfectly well what they meant by the visible sky; the first man who, after looking everywhere for what he wanted, and who at last in sheer exhaustion grasped at the name of sky as better than nothing, knew but too well that his success was after all a miserable failure. The brilliant sky was, no doubt, the most exalted; it was the only unchanging and infinite being that had received a name, and that could lend its name to that as yet unborn idea of the Infinite which disquieted the human mind. But let us only see this clearly, that the man who chose that name did not mean, could not have meant that the visible sky was all he wanted, that the blue canopy above was his god.

And now observe what happens when the name sky has thus been given and accepted. The seeking and finding of such a name, however imperfect, was the act of a manly mind, of a poet, of a prophet, of a patriarch, who could struggle, like another Jacob, with the idea of God that was within him, till he had found some name for it. But when that name had to be used with the young and the aged, with silly children and doting grandmothers, it was impossible to preserve it from being misunderstood. The first step downwards would be to look upon the sky as the abode of that Being which was called by the same name; the next step would be to forget altogether what was behind the name, and to implore the sky, the visible canopy over our heads, to send rain, to protect the fields, the cattle, and the corn, to give to man his daily bread. Nay, very soon those who warned the

world that it was not the visible sky that was meant, but that what was meant was something high above, deep below, far away from the blue firmament, would be looked upon either as dreamers whom no one could understand or as unbelievers who despised the sky, the great benefactor of the world. Lastly, many things that were true of the visible sky would be told of its divine namesake, and legends would spring up, destroying every trace of the deity that once was hidden beneath that ambiguous name.

I call this variety of acceptance, this misunderstanding, which is inevitable in ancient and also in modern religion, the *dialectic growth and decay*, or, if you like, the *dialectic life of religion*, and we shall see again and again how important it is in enabling us to form a right estimate of religious language and thought. The dialectic shades in the language of religion are almost infinite; they explain the decay, but they also account for the life of religion. You may remember that Jacob Grimm, in one of his poetical moods, explained the origin of High and Low German, of Sanskrit and Prakrit, of Doric and Ionic, by looking upon the high dialects as originally the language of men, upon the low dialects as originally the language of women and children. We can observe, I believe, the same parallel streams in the language of religion. There is a high and there is a low dialect; there is a broad and there is a narrow dialect; there are dialects for men and for children, for clergy and laity, for the noisy streets and for the still and lonely chamber. And as the child on growing up to manhood has to unlearn the language of the nursery, its religion, too, has to be translated from a feminine into a more masculine dialect. This does not take place without a struggle, and it is this constantly recurring struggle, this

inextinguishable desire to recover itself, which keeps religion from utter stagnation. From first to last religion is oscillating between these two opposite poles, and it is only if the attraction of one of the two poles becomes too strong, that the healthy movement ceases, and stagnation and decay set in. If religion cannot accommodate itself on the one side to the capacity of children, or if on the other side it fails to satisfy the requirements of men, it has lost its vitality, and it becomes either mere superstition or mere philosophy.

If I have succeeded in expressing myself clearly, I think you will understand in what sense it may be said that there is truth in all religions, even in the lowest. The intention which led to the first utterance of a name like sky, used no longer in its material sense, but in a higher sense, was right. The spirit was willing, but language was weak. The mental process was not, as commonly supposed, an identification of the definite idea of deity with sky: such a process is hardly conceivable; it was, on the contrary, a first attempt at defining the indefinite impression of deity by a name that should approximately or metaphorically render at least one of its most prominent features. The first framer of that name of the deity, I repeat it again, could as little have thought of the material heaven as we do when we speak of the kingdom of heaven.¹

And now let us observe another feature of ancient religion that has often been so startling, but which, if we only remember what is the nature of ancient language, becomes likewise perfectly intelligible. It is well known that ancient languages are particularly rich in synonymes, or, to speak more correctly, that in them the same object is called by many names—is, in fact, *polyonymous*. While in modern lan-

guages most objects have one name only, we find in ancient Sanskrit, in ancient Greek and Arabic, a large choice of words for the same object. This is perfectly natural. Each name could express one side only of the object that had to be named, and, not satisfied with one partial name, the early framers of language produced one name after the other, and after a time retained those which seemed most useful for special purposes. Thus, the sky might be called not only the brilliant, but the dark, the covering, the thundering, the rain-giving. This is the *polyonymy* of language, and it is what we are accustomed to call *polytheism* in religion. Aristotle said: 'God, though He is one, has many names (is polyonymous) because He is called according to states into which He always enters anew.'² The same mental yearning which found its first satisfaction in using the name of the brilliant sky as an indication of the Divine, would soon grasp at other names of the sky, not expressive of brilliancy, and therefore more appropriate to a religious mood in which the Divine was conceived as dark, awful, all-powerful. Thus we find in Sanskrit, by the side of Dyaus, another name of the covering sky, Varuna, originally only another attempt at naming the Divine, but soon assuming a separate and independent existence.

But this is not all. The very imperfection of every name that had been chosen, their very inadequacy to express the fullness and infinity of the Divine, would keep up the search for new names till at last every part of nature in which an approach to the Divine could be discovered was chosen as a name of the Omnipresent. If the presence of the Divine was perceived in the strong wind, the strong wind became its name; if its presence was perceived in the earthquake and the

¹ Medhurst, *Inquiry*, p. 20.

² Arist. *De Mundo*, cap. vii. init.

fire, the earthquake and the fire became its names. Do you still wonder at polytheism or at mythology? Why, they are inevitable. They are, if you like, a *parler enfantin* of religion. But the world had its childhood, and when it was a child it spoke as a child, it understood as a child, it thought as a child; and, I say again, in that it spoke as a child its language was true, in that it believed as a child its religion was true. The fault rests with us, if we insist on taking the language of children for the language of men, if we attempt to translate literally ancient into modern language, oriental into occidental speech, poetry into prose.

It is perfectly true that at present few interpreters, if any, would take such expressions as the head, the face, the mouth, the lips, the breath of Jehovah in a literal sense. But what does it mean, then, if we hear one of our most honest and most learned theologians declare that he can no longer read from the altar the words of the Bible, 'God spake these words and said'? If we can make allowance for mouth and lips and breath, we can surely make the same allowance for words and their utterance. The language of antiquity is the language of childhood: ay, and we ourselves, when we try to reach the Infinite and the Divine by means of more abstract terms, are but like children trying to place a ladder against the blue sky.

The *parler enfantin* in religion is not extinct; it never will be. Not only have some of the ancient childish religions been kept alive, as, for instance, the religion of India, which is to my mind like a half-fossilised megatherion walking about in the broad daylight of the nineteenth century; but in our own religion and in the language of the New Testament there are many things which disclose their true meaning to those only who know

what language is made of, who have not only ears to hear, but a heart to understand the real meaning of parables.

What I maintain, then, is this, that as we put the most charitable interpretation on the utterances of children, we ought to put the same charitable interpretation on the apparent absurdities, the follies, the errors, nay, even the horrors of ancient religion. When we read of Belus, the supreme god of the Babylonians, cutting off his own head, that the blood flowing from it might be mixed with the dust out of which men were to be formed, this sounds horrible enough; but depend upon it what was originally intended by this myth was no more than this, that there is in man an element of Divine life: that we are also His offspring. The same idea existed in the ancient religion of the Egyptians, for we read, in the 17th chapter of their *Ritual*, that the Sun mutilated himself, and that from the stream of his blood he created all beings.¹ And the author of Genesis, too, when he wishes to express the same idea, can only use the same human and symbolical language; he can only say that 'God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.'

If we have once learnt to be charitable in the interpretation of the language of other religions, we shall more easily learn to be charitable in the interpretation of the language of our own; we shall no longer try to force a literal interpretation on words and sentences in our sacred books, which, if interpreted literally, must lose their original purport and their spiritual truth. In this way, I believe that a comparative study of the religions of the world will teach us many a useful lesson in the study of our own: that it will teach us, at all events, to be charitable both abroad and at home.

¹ Vicomte de Rougé in *Annales de Philosophie chrétienne*, Nov. 1869, p. 332.

